

# THE JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL

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#13



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MAKING OF GODZILLA • JAPAN'S MASTER OF MONSTERS

The period ghost film, *EMPIRE OF PASSION*, released October 28, 1978 in Japan, begins when an unemployed roustabout awakens sexual yearnings in an older woman living on a farm with her husband. The young man's carefree manner and intense ardor so overwhelm the woman that she gives in to him. The obstacles and pitfalls of fabled love unfold in Nagisa Oshima's film based on a true story by Mrs. Itoko Nakamura. One of the world's master directors, Oshima presents a sad tale, scripted by Oshima as well, of two lovers consumed by the passion that they seek. Having crossed the unspoken boundary of commitment, their only recourse is to murder the husband whose corpse is then dispatched down an abandoned well. Oshima delves into those "destructive forces of passion in a more rigid world where the supernatural seems a part of everyday life" (*Variety*), for soon the appearance of the dead man's ghost signals the beginning of the end as the couple, enslaved by desire, see guilt slowly insinuating itself between them. The ghost also makes itself known to villagers in their dreams, arousing suspicion about the missing husband. The tortured lovers break down and confess to lawmen who have broken in on them in the midst of a sublime embrace, yet both still feel the love for each other that precipitated their downfall. *EMPIRE OF PASSION* depicts a somber landscape of embattled moods and emotions, of tragic cruelty and overwhelming calm. "The paroxysm of cruel love is of such blinding beauty and of such refined art that unless one closes one's eyes, one cannot escape from a sort of sympathy with the perpetrators of a crime. The style with which Oshima has directed this tragic story (in which sexual desire joins with emotion in a descent to hell) brings to mind the great Shakespeare" (*André Rayne De Mandargues*). This daring venture displays the naked modernity of Oshima's vision, clothed in a traditional Japanese tale. A "gripping narrative, forceful performances and superb photography are unified by Oshima's masterly skill" (*International Herald Tribune*). It is his "remarkable lyrical style" (*Hollywood Reporter*) that earned Oshima the award of Best Director at the 1978 Cannes Film Festival for *EMPIRE OF PASSION*. The film was produced by Argos Film, Paris and Oshima Productions, Ltd., Tokyo, and is being distributed in the U.S. by Barbary Coast Releasing, Ltd., San Francisco. □



# COMMENT

"13" has quite a stigma attached to it. High rise office structures figuratively have no thirteenth floor. William Castle's THIRTEEN GHOSTS offers mediocrity no matter how one looks at it. Toho and Dolei have in release, "two times thirteen" years following both studios' entry into fantasy filmmaking as of this writing, rather unremarkable pictures issued for the very sake of stimulating what once was their forer: Toho's EARTHQUAKE 79 and Dolei's SUPER MONSTER GAMERA.

That number "13" has become intertwined with The Japanese Fantasy Film Journal is also true, but with a positive thrust. In 1968 a decision was committed to edit in an effort to give credence to an underestimated genre from Japan, and each new chapter has built on that decision. This issue won't fly in the face of tradition with respect to JFFJ's history, but it will take to task that other tradition, bringing you what a most in-depth endeavor in a compound provocation of fate, a thirteenth issue on the thirteenth anniversary of JFFJ.

Foremost is Ed Godziszewski's place on the filming of Toho's GODZILLA, containing the first-ever English retrospection on the unlimited energy and dedication the pioneers of Japanese fantasy generated in giving birth to the film. The technicians deserve this honorarium for that processer production, an atmospheric and darkly mystical motion picture.

Moving into the skittles, from a work by the editor, the magazine takes to task Toho's first five years of that decade, a period which would appear to be the last of the best, for soon complacency with formula would turn Toho's commodity into a parody of earlier memorable fantasy cinema. Followers wearied on the motion pictures of the latter skittles and seventies no doubt will find disagreement. Yet, while those years offer an occasional glimmer of hope in certain films or sequences, they cannot match the craftsmanship of the first ten years' scenarios featuring sympathetic characters who must interact with beasts and science.

The informative feature articles and film news complete what is, I feel, the definitive JFFJ, having had thirteen years and thirteen issues prove its climb. That time frame and its positivism does not solely belong to the magazine alone. It also belongs to this editor who has met many of the fans and witnessed the growth of interest in Japan's fantasy films and television throughout the U.S. and the world market manifest itself in the form of fan clubs, including the Cartoon/Fantasy Organization and the Japanese Fantasy Film Society. Though "13" has a stigma attached to it, I think you'll not find it here.

*Greg Shoemaker*  
Editor



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## EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Greg Shoemaker

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# INNERVIEW

## ITALIAN KID-VID: "UFO ROBOT" IS A BONANZA

East has met West, and at least in the land of cartoons it has meant a skyrocketing business for both.

SACIS, the RAI subsidiary that handles sales and merchandising for the state TV company, has cashed in on the success of Toei Animation's UFO ROBOT GRENIZER series, flooding the toy market with creatures from outer space. Producing nearly 60 different products inspired by the Japanese cartoon characters, SACIS has checked up sales in the millions of dollars. Some 50,000 books telling the story of the robot Grenizer (Goldorak in Italy) and his space enemies were sold along with T-shirts, chewing gum, stickers, tops, games—all bearing the fantastic designs of the "UFO Robot" series. And 30,000,000 two-inch figurines of the cartoon characters were sold at a healthy 1,000 lire (\$120) apiece.

The first of the robot series was aired last spring (1978) on RAI's second channel at 7pm. When the second series finally wound up to record ratings on Jan. 12 (1979), the country's leading newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, commented on page one:

"Last night the last show of the second series of the cartoon ATTAS UFO ROBOT (as it is titled in Italy) which week after week has kept our children glued to the TV set was shown. No more Actarus, Alcor and Venuso who is love with Actarus and

A French publication for children. Featured within is an illustrated chapter in comic book style of the exploits of robot Grenizer, renamed Goldorak in Europe.

pilots the "Space Dolphin." The outerspace hornets of the planet Vega were finally destroyed by plutonium rays. Will they be back? Probably. The Japanese cartoonists of Toei Animation are not the kind of people who keep their hands in their pockets. The success of the characters all over the world has been astonishing and has given rise to a parallel market of toys, adhesive figures, books, records, etc. A billion-lire business. The Japanese cartoonists don't care about the hullabaloo that Goldorak expressed an "ideology of annihilation." They know that even the Italian children—at least 10,000,000 of them—are happy to see Goldorak again."

The polemics stirred up by the robot series has even reached, in fact, the floor of Parliament. Silverio Corvisieri, a member of Parliament from the far left and a member of the Parliamentary Commission of Vigilance for RAI, urged the commission to investigate the program which, according to Corvisieri, promotes a fascist-like figure.

"Goldorak is an orgy of annihilating violence," insists the deputy, "a cult of allegiance to great warriors, a worship of the electronic machine." Corvisieri stressed that he was not in favor of censoring the cartoons, but merely pointing to the danger of their message.

The cartoons have also been attacked by the feminists. "There is a subtle anti-feminism," says Tilde Gian Galina, an expert in child behavior, "which could destroy the effects of years of struggle in discussion and books." When Venuso, for example, the only female character, finally gets to drive the space ship in the last segment of the second series, she and the space ship fall to Earth.

The SACIS officials tend to dismiss these criticisms, arguing that the children don't read these messages into the cartoons. They are above all attracted by the color and action of the program. Pointing to the success of the TV series HEIDI (also produced by Toei), which is certainly not a violent, anti-feminist story, they insist that it is the Japanese technique that has won over the Italian kiddies.

"We conducted a survey with Italian children," explains SACIS managing director Gian Paolo Cresti, "and the overwhelming majority preferred the Japanese cartoons. The American programs have become too familiar." (A reprint of an article in the April 11, 1979 issue of *Vivente*.)

## JAPAN'S ANIMATION BOOM

Japanese animation is riding the crest of a boom mainly confined to the national territory, but a strong marketing factor in the Far East, some European countries and in isolated markets around the world.

Animation In Japan has become a

separate, thriving community in which the television networks are the heaviest investors, followed by the publishing companies, the major film companies, music-record companies and a growing number of foreign outfits seeking coproduction, territorial distribution and ancillary ties with a medium in full momentum.

Core of the animation community is made up of artisan groups—some too small to be classed as companies—but all totally dedicated to an entertainment form heavily conditioning comportment, moral values and consumer reflexes of Nippon children and young people, probably beyond anything experienced in other parts of the world. At the head of the animation community are such banners as Toei—with its big animation studio and manpower of 350, Nippon Animation Studios and Tokyo Movie Shinsha. But activity in this field is also conducted by a myriad animation clans and collectives who have worked together for years in artisan fashion.

The heart of the business centers around the 5-7pm programming slot of the five major TV nets. All program half-hour animation series during this two-hour time slot almost every day of the year. To meet the demand, a company like Toei Animation Co. is producing five to six half-hour segs a week and other companies and clans are equally busy supplying this specialized product to the webs.

Based on a survey of the major Japanese companies and active independents, it is possible to calculate the cost of a half-hour animation seg at between \$30-\$40,000. Feeding this basic figure in to a Japanese calculator and multiplying by the total number of segs produced during the course of the year on just the five principal networks, the production cost can average out at \$250,000,000 per annum.

The film industry investment in Japan animation features is running higher than \$25,000,000 a year and could be closer to \$50,000,000. Production costs of animated commercials is conservatively estimated at \$10,000,000 a year.

Japanese trade leaders and reps of agreed that merchandising directly related to TV series and features easily topped total investment and revenue, including overseas sales, from animation produced. On the strength of these figures, the animation community is well over a trade volume of \$500,000,000 and should the anticipated breakthrough materialize in the U.S. through coproduction agreements or direct acquisitions (including collateral merchandising), Japanese animation will stand as a \$1-billion entertainment activity.

A number of trade developments in recent years substantiate phenomenal strides of the animation community in Japan. The boxoffice clamp for 1979 was a Toei animated feature GALAXY EXPRESS 999—with rentals at \$8,000,000. On the overall box office chart, GALAXY EXPRESS 999 placed fourth behind 7th champ SUPERMAN and runnerup DEATH ON THE



## NILE and GREASE

At the same time, the film majors in Tokyo like Toho-Towa, Shochiku and Nippon Herald are heavily investing in the animation community for the first time. Nippon Herald had produced animation features sporadically during the post-war decade but according to young Nippon Herald proxy Irie Fumikawa the company is now producing at least one series and two animation features a year. To underscore the bright situation for cartoon entertainment, (Mr. Fumikawa) said that American live action features dominate the Japanese market, but native animation has a tight monopoly on home screens and big screens—wiping out all competition, including the best American has to offer.

Another Japanese major now actively embracing the new trend is Shochiku with a range of animation product reaching out to adults as well. Motoyuki Kubotani, general manager of the International division, who has spent most of his career with live action features, is enthusiastic about animation product. "The success of Japanese animation can be attributed to a number of factors. We have developed technique to an extraordinary level and we have applied it to achieve pace and action that simply cannot be created in live action pictures. Japan has been a leader in science fiction and science fantasy and these elements are naturally absorbed by our animators. Almost everything imaginable in characters, expression and gadgetry became part of our animation output."

In recent years a stronger effort is being made to internationalize cartoon product and, according to Miyako Ejiri, head of the Arthur Davis Organization Japan, even the young Japanese audiences are responding more and more to basic story values and characters from other lands, especially after (the) release of STAR WARS.

"The film introduced a fresh current of ideas, and many were adapted in series and features subsequently. Now we are taking elements from all countries without sacrificing national traits."

Ejiri is particularly fascinated with the tight cycle of comic strip "dream" heroes around which series and features are modelled and the simultaneous explosion of merchandising the characters create. Taking the latest popular character, "Dreemur," star of a popular TV series whose Toho-Towa release of an animated feature in 1979 starring a mother cat with super-human power proved to be as popular in 1980 as GALAXY EXPRESS 999 was in 1979, she researched the consumer backlash on her six-year-old daughter item by item, "merely to hold her status in class" with cartoon consumer kiddies around her. Total outlay, she said, was between \$1,000 and \$12,000 during the run of the series for a "Dreemur" piggybank, pencils, necklace, hanabishi, furniture, shoes—to name only a few suggested by the animated supernatural cat robot. "Spending varies in different social levels, but it is repeated from series to

series and adds up to the equivalent of hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. And more often than not, the ingenious array of cartoon oriented consumer items and electronic gadgets has a greater international market than the TV series or features."

Toho-Towa chairman Kawakita attributes the success of animation in Japan, where 10 to 12 features are now being produced annually, to the plight of the world—"dull and stupid"—from which

young people are evading in greater and greater numbers. "There is no limit to fantasy in this medium and this explains its fascination for children and youth. Comic books and the visual stimulus have taken over from books and the cultural establishment, even in the universities. This has become a bridge to the upsurge of animation as an entertainment form." (Reprint of a June 4, 1980 *Variety* article by Hank Werba.)

Publicity art for Toei's money-making, 1980 an-feature, TOWARD THE TERRA (TERA HE). Successful Japanese animation leans toward escapism with serious production practically non-existent. "For this reason," said Naoki Tagawa in *International Film Guide 1979*, "it seems too many Japanese films are becoming childish."





Photos © 1979 Shochiku Co., Ltd.

**YASHAGAKE, or DEMON POND**, the English-language release title, was released on October 20, 1979 in Tokyo to box office success, a reward commensurate with the lengthy pre-production effort of Shochiku, a company actively seeking out unique projects for motion pictures, theatre and television, as this picture indicates, but that doesn't necessarily suggest a great film. In spite of the picture's popularity, there appears to be some elements of the production which tend to lessen its impact as a reviewer in the March 26, 1980 issue of *Variety* has noted: "Occasional great images and self-evident ambitiousness provoke a continued extension of credit and patience throughout most of this exceedingly bizarre fantasy, but it ultimately goes unrewarded. Erotic. It always interesting (due in part to his talent for pictorial composition), director Masahiro Shinoda here tries to mesh Kabuki style, supernatural legend, a title history, and mega-special effects in a work more successful in its parts than as a coherent whole. Helmer's admirers will generally leave disappointed while any more general audiences would undoubtedly be mystified."

Set in 1913, the screenplay, based on a drama by Kyoka Izumi, tells of an explorer named Gakuen Yamasawa coming upon, on old friend, Akira, and his wife In Eitizan (Fukui Prefecture), a remote area of Japan surrounded by the mountains of Mt. Kiri Pass. Akira had come to the valley, he tells his friend, out of a desire to see the Demon Pond where he eventually met Yotabai, an aged bell-keeper who advised Akira of a particular legend. "In the past, when men fought the water and the village seemed doomed, a holy man sealed the Dragon God in the Demon Pond. The Dragon God swore that he wanted to be free but pledged that if a bell were cast and rung three times a day without fail, he would not cause the pond to overflow and send flood waters that would submerge the village." Betrayed by the villagers for his belief in the legend, Akira, upon Yotabai's death, became the tender of the bell, a promise made to the dying man.

The telling of the story completed, Akira guides Gakuen to the mysterious pond, but mystical forces assembling elsewhere soon disturb the surface of calm as the picture, according to *Variety*, "veers into wild fantasy." Princess Shirayuki, the incarnation of the Dragon God, longs to be beside her beloved, a young man who lives in Sando Pond. If she leaves, however, the village below the pond will be destroyed by rampaging flood waters, bound as she is by the pledge made by her ancestors. Although she would like to see the bell destroyed in order to nullify the pledge, Princess Shirayuki decides otherwise for the sake of Akira and his wife, Yui.

Plagued by drought, the villagers send out their leaders to capture Yui to make her a sacrifice to the Dragon God for rain. Unable to be rescued by Akira or Gakuen, Yui kills herself, and a despondent Akira

does likewise, leaving the bell untended of the appointed hour of its ringing. Lightning flashes and dark clouds form over the Demon Pond until hell is unleashed in torrents of water which cascade down the mountainside destroying the village below.

The princess appears, at last freed from her obligations to begin her journey to her beloved. The scene is marked by the only living thing visible in the vast expanse of water covering the town. Gakuen Yamasawa, who had tied himself to a post imbedded in the ground, survives.


"Clearly designed as tour de force," reports *Variety*, "the concluding sequence has its own power, but by this time all potential meaning has taken by the wayside, and (the) climax stands as an empty exercise in technique."

The film is most assuredly guilty in its use of professional talent. Apart from director Shinoda, famous for such works as *DOUBLE SUICIDE* and *SAMURAI SPY*, assisting him are Masao Kosugi, director of photography of the two Panavision cameras which simultaneously filmed the action, and well-known for his work including a team-up with Shinoda on *THE ASSASSIN*, and second unit director Noriaki Sokamoto. Set design is by Kiyoshi Awazu, who also worked with Shinoda on *DOUBLE SUICIDE*. The film is enriched with a score from the innovative Isao Tomita (see JFFJ #12 for more information on Tomita), whose previous genre compositions include Toho's *CATASTROPHE 1999* and Mushi's *KIMBA THE WHITE LION*.

"(The) most sustained point of interest," *Variety* adds, "is (the) performance of famed Kabuki actor Tamasaburo Bando who, harking back to tradition, plays both the wife and demon princess. Even in close-up, Bando is entirely convincing as a woman, making it possible for the uninitiated to watch (the) entire film without realizing performer is a man."

**DEMON POND (YASHAGAKE)**: Produced by Shochiku Co., Ltd., Executive producers: Shigemitsu Sugisaki, Yukio Tomizawa, Kanji Nakagawa, Director: Masahiro Shinoda. Original story: Kyoka Izumi. Screenplay: Takeshi Tamura, Haruhiko Mimura. Director of photography: Masao Kosugi. Second unit director: Noriaki Sokamoto. Art directors: Kiyoshi Awazu, Setsu Asakura, Yutaka Yokoyama. Music: Isao Tomita. Editors: Zen Ikeda, Sachiko Yamachi. Director of special visual effects: Nobuo Yajima. Filmed in VistaVision and 4 channel stereo. Running time: 123 mins. Starring: Tamasaburo Bando (Yui/Princess Shirayuki), Go Kato (Akira Hagiwara), Tsutomu Yamazaki (Gakuen Yamasawa), Koji Nanbara (Priest Shikami), Yutaka Tanami, Hisashi Igawa, Nanhai Miki, Juro Kara, Ryunosuke Konedda □

# DEMON POND



映像の奇蹟となるか。

主演＝坂東 玉三郎(二役)

加藤 剛  
山崎 努

原作＝泉 鏡花  
(講談社文庫刊)

脚本＝田村 孟  
三村 晴彦

監督＝篠田 正浩

# 花又池

In the 35th century man has conquered time, space, even death—mechanized bodies have made man immortal. Still, progress has been uneven. In the slums of a great city live a few remaining humans unable to afford immortality—or the cost of a ticket on the Galaxy Express, a space train that carries its passengers to the outermost reaches of the universe in search of their dreams.

One of the unfortunate is an orphan named Joey, witness to the death of his mother by a group of men led by Count Mekiz. Determined to avenge the murder and seek immortality, his mother's dying wish, Joey steals a lifetime ticket on the space train, but the action is noticed by policemen who chase the boy. Rescued by Mayfel, a mysterious woman who bears a striking resemblance to his mother, Joey accepts an invitation to be her bodyguard, and he boards the Galaxy Express with her.

With assistance from Emeraldia the pirate and Captain Harlock who meet Joey along the way, he is able to obtain the revenge he

Photo © 1992 Toei Co., Ltd.



Photo © 1992 Toei Co., Ltd.

Several years later (Iin approached Toei for work at the time the company began feature length cartoon production. He was hired as an animator but left two years later to pursue a directing career. At Mushi Productions Iin directed the television series ASTRO BOY. Other projects have included MOONIN, SPACE PRINCE CAPTAIN HARLOCK, a character also starring in GALAXY EXPRESS, and GRAND PRIX.

Creator and designer for EXPRESS, Leiji Matsumoto was born in 1938 in Shizuoka, Japan. By his own recollections he was "always a dreamer." An accomplished cartoonist as a child, Matsumoto had his work first published in a boy's magazine in 1954 while he was only a freshman in high school. Upon graduation he moved to Tokyo where he drew cartoons geared to a female audience and studied the works of Tezuka, Disney and Fleischer.

In 1968 Matsumoto began the science fiction cartoon series "Bex-droid" and continued to have his works published in youth magazines

# GALAXY EXPRESS

seeks, but he has come to realize that eternal life does not lead to eternal happiness, and so he sets out to destroy the source of the mechanical people.

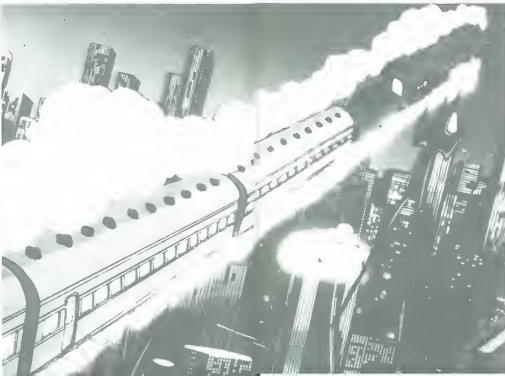
Joey is betrayed by Mayfel. In reality the ruler of the planet where the immortality process began, and she has him arrested. Overwhelmed, confused, and afraid, Joey sees his trip and eventual escape from Mayfel taking on a new enlightenment; a young man's quest for his dreams, although unfulfilled, allows him to acquire wisdom and understanding of the meaning of life, which like the Galaxy Express transcends time and space.

The history of GALAXY EXPRESS began in 1978 when Toei's animation division released its 26 half-hour episode television series GALAXY EXPRESS 999, created by Leiji Matsumoto. The popularity of the show provided the company to produce an all-new animated feature based on the television premise, and the Japanese space-adventure was successfully released as GALAXY EXPRESS 999 in 1979. Changed to GALAXY EXPRESS, the film has been picked up for distribution in the U.S. by New World Pictures. However, while countless motion pictures are submitted and screened for acquisition consideration, no one approached New World about the film.

"I discovered GALAXY EXPRESS one day while reading Variety," explains Roger Corman, president of New World. "It was listed as the top grossing film in Japan, and I decided to investigate. Many foreign films do not achieve box office success (outside their country of origin) due to cultural differences, but I was delighted with the universal theme of GALAXY EXPRESS. It's the story of a boy in search of his dreams and the insights he gains from his adventures. I was especially impressed with the brilliant animation which, combined with a good story, will be entertaining to youth and adult markets."

EXPRESS' director, Taro Rii, born in Tokyo in 1941, was first introduced to film by his father, an aspiring actor and film enthusiast. An avid filmmaker as a child, Rii was writing screenplays while still in high school. One scenario was forwarded to director Kyoji Watanabe who was working on a project for Toei. Watanabe not only read the screenplay, but returned it with notations and corrections.

Photo © 1992 New World Pictures



"Four Dimensional World," his next of series, garnered favorable attention. This was followed by "Clockwork Odan" ("The Man") which received critical acclaim and firmly established Matsumoto as a major force in the field of cartooning.

The task of transferring his art to film has been most challenging and rewarding to Matsumoto, and GALAXY EXPRESS was no exception. "Producing animation has been a cherished dream of mine since childhood days when I first began to draw. I always wanted to make a film that would incorporate my love for mankind and appreciation of nature with my fascination for science fiction. At the same time," he continues, "I have always had this dream of riding a train in space where the beauties, mysteries and dangers of the beyond would be mine to experience. What I have done is combine all these elements with a touch of defunctish romanticism, and the result is GALAXY EXPRESS."

In the film, a young boy sets out on a mission. Not only does he accomplish his task, but he learns a valuable lesson. Through his encounters with pirates, bandits, scientists, rulers, and beautiful women, he matures to understand it is not the length of one's life, but the quality of life that is important.

This child has heroes, dreams and desires that all of us, young and old, secretly share. It is my hope that GALAXY EXPRESS will be a trip that everyone will board, for imagination is the only necessary ticket!"

GALAXY EXPRESS (GINGA TEISUDO 999), Director: Taro Rii. Executive producer: Chikao Inada. Original story: Leiji Matsumoto. Screenplay (Japanese version): Shiro Uehama. Screenplay (English version): Paul Grogan. Music: Naotomi Aoki. Lyrics (English version): Renee Feldman. Vocals (English version): Renee Feldman, Jay White. Editors (English version): Robert Kiser, Shiro Sakurik. Editor (Japanese version): Masaoi Hana. Animation director: Kazuo Komatsubara. Produced by Toei Animation Co., Ltd. In association with Toei Co., Ltd., Voices: Anthony Brooks, Bradbury, Corey Burton, Fay McKay, Tony Pope, Gary Seeger, B.J. Ward, William Woodson. MPAA rating: PG-13.



In the 35th century man has conquered time, space, even death—mechanized bodies have made man immortal. Still, progress has been uneven. In the slums of a great city live a few remaining humans unable to afford immortality—or the cost of a ticket on the Galaxy Express, a space train that carries its passengers to the outermost reaches of the universe in search of their dreams.

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With assistance from Esmeralda the pirate and Captain Harlock who meet Joey along the way, he is able to obtain the revenge he

Photo © WFF Toei Co. Ltd.



# GALAXY EXPRESS 999

seeks, but he has come to realize that eternal life does not lead to eternal happiness, and so he sets out to destroy the source of the mechanical people.

Joey is betrayed by Maytel in reality the ruler of the planet where the immortality process began, and she has him arrested. Overwhelmed, confused and afraid, Joey sees his trip and eventual escape from Maytel taking on a new enlightenment, a young man's quest for his dreams, although unfilled, allows him to acquire wisdom and understanding of the meaning of life, which like the Galaxy Express transcends time and space.

The history of GALAXY EXPRESS began in 1978 when Toei's animation division released its 26 half-hour episode television series GALAXY EXPRESS 999, created by Leiji Matsumoto. The popularity of the show prodded the company to produce an all-new animated feature based on the teleseries' premise, and the Japanese space-adventure was successfully released as GALAXY EXPRESS 999 in 1979. Changed to GALAXY EXPRESS, the film has been picked up for distribution in the U.S. by New World Pictures. However, while countless motion pictures are submitted and screened for acquisition consideration, no one approached New World about the film.

"I discovered GALAXY EXPRESS one day while reading Variety," explains Roger Corman, president of New World. "It was listed as the top grossing film in Japan, and I decided to investigate. Many foreign films do not achieve box office success (outside their country of origin) due to cultural differences, but I was delighted with the universal theme of GALAXY EXPRESS. It's the story of a boy in search of his dreams and the insights he gains from his adventures. I was especially impressed with the brilliant animation which, combined with a good story, will be entertaining to youth and adult markets."

EXPRESS' director, Taro Rii, born in Tokyo in 1941, was first introduced to film by his father, an aspiring actor and film enthusiast. An avid filmmaker as a child, Rii was writing screenplays while still in high school. One scenario was forwarded to director Kunio Watanabe who was working on a project for Toei. Watanabe not only read the screenplay, but returned it with notations and corrections.

Photo © 1983 New World Pictures



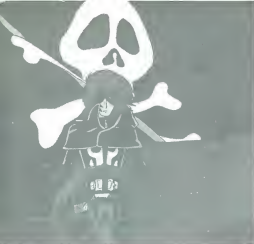


Photo © 1999 Toei Co., Ltd.

Several years later Rin approached Toei for work at the time the company began feature length cartoon production. He was hired as an animator but left two years later to pursue a directing career. At Mushi Productions Rin directed the television series *ASTRO BOY*. Other projects have included *MOOMIN*, *SPACE PIRATE CAPTAIN HARLOCK*, a character also starring in *GALAXY EXPRESS*, and *GRAND PRIX*.

Creator and designer for *EXPRESS*, Leiji Matsumoto was born in 1938 in Shizuku, Japan. By his own recollections he was "always a dreamer."

An accomplished cartoonist as a child, Matsumoto had his work first published in a boy's magazine in 1954 while he was only a freshman in high school. Upon graduation he moved to Tokyo where he drew cartoons geared to a female audience and studied the works of Tezuka, Disney and Fleischer.

In 1968 Matsumoto began the science fiction cartoon series "Sex-oid" and continued to have his works published in youth magazines.

# EXPRESS



"Four Dimensional World," his next of series, garnered favorable attention. This was followed by "Otoko Oidori" ("The Man") which received critical acclaim and firmly established Matsumoto as a major force in the field of cartooning.

The task of transferring his art to film has been most challenging and rewarding to Matsumoto, and *GALAXY EXPRESS* was no exception.

"Producing animation has been a cherished dream of mine since childhood days when I first began to draw. I always wanted to make a film that would incorporate my love for mankind and appreciation of nature with my fascination for science fiction. At the same time," he continues, "I have always had this dream of riding a train in space where the beauties, mysteries and dangers of the beyond would be mine to experience. What I have done is combine all these elements with a touch of old-fashioned romanticism, and the result is *GALAXY EXPRESS*."

"In the film, a young boy sets out on a mission. Not only does he accomplish his task, but he learns a valuable lesson. Through his encounters with pirates, bandits, scientists, rulers, and beautiful women, he matures to understand it is not the length of one's life, but the quality of life that is important."

"The child has hopes, dreams and desires that all of us, young and old, secretly share. It is my hope that *GALAXY EXPRESS* will be a film that everyone will board, for imagination is the only necessary ticket."

**GALAXY EXPRESS (GINGA TETSUDO 999)** Director: Taro Rin; Executive producer: Chikashi Imada; Original story: Leiji Matsumoto; Screenplay (Japanese version): Shiro Ishimori; Screenplay (English version): Paul Grogan; Music: Naomasa Aoki; Lyrics (English version): Renee Feldman; Vocals (English version): Renee Feldman; Jay White; Editors (English version): Robert Kiser, Skip Schoonick; Editor (Japanese version): Masao Hana; Animation director: Kazuo Komatsubara; Produced by Toei Animation Co., Ltd. in association with Toei Co., Ltd.; Voices (English version): Brooke Broadshaw, Corey Burton, Fay McKay, Tony Pope, Gary Seeger, BJ Ward, William Woodlort; MPAA rating: PG-13.



# SANRIO FILMS



Sanrio's formation as a small wholesaler and retailer of gift items nineteen years ago in Japan stemmed from president and founder Shintaro Tsuji's stressing that "good things come in small packages," a belief that children could be little ambassadors of good will. The success of this philosophy has allowed Sanrio to blossom into a worldwide firm doing over a quarter billion dollars annual business in merchandising, publishing and motion picture production and distribution. Eventually establishing motion picture production and distribution facilities in Hollywood because of the city's position as a world communication center through film, Sanrio is becoming a powerful force in the rebirth of family films due to this affiliation. Nowhere is this recognition more apparent than with the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature given to Sanrio's *WHO ARE THE DEBOLTS AND WHERE DID THEY GET NINETEEN KIDS?*

Two of the company's 1979 fantasy films, *WINDS OF CHANGE* and *NUTCRACKER FANTASY*, were a part of their effort to make the company synonymous with animation excellence and originality.

## WINDS OF CHANGE

*WINDS OF CHANGE* enacts the tales of Ovid from the ancient Greek myths. These stories present ancient man's interpretation of himself, his universe and his gods through a series of metamorphoses, stemming from the earliest concepts that attributed life to inanimate objects. Ovid's fifteen books of poems have been transformed by contemporary musicians and by over 170 artist-animators into a film three

Top Right/Middle Left: *WINDS OF CHANGE*; Top Left/Bottom Left: *NUTCRACKER FANTASY*. Two ambitious animation films from Sanrio.



years in the making, a blending of ancient and modern imaginations.

The main character of the film guiding the audience through this evolution is named Wondermaker, who changes his physical appearance to become part of the stories and further explain the meaning of the tales by acting out the Greek roles in the part of "Perseus." Wondermaker is sent out to bring back the head of Medusa, whose powers include the ability to turn anyone to stone simply by looking into her awesome face. In the role of "Actaeon," the mighty hunter, he discovers the beautiful goddess Diana who becomes furious with Wondermaker when he spies on her bathing and transforms him into a small deer. In "Envy" he is the winged god Mercury who is constantly pursued in his courtship of the goddess Hera. As "Orpheus," he acts out the classic love story of "Orpheus and Eurydice" through their travels to Hades. And finally in the "Phaethon" role, Wondermaker leads his flaming chariot across the sky once each day, the Greek explanation for the rising and setting of the sun.

The term "Metamorphoses" bears more meaning to this film than as a basis for story adaptation. In fact WINDS OF CHANGE was originally entitled METAMORPHOSES in its initial theatrical engagement back in the fall of 1977. The completed picture was issued without segue narration and featured a contemporary score by the likes of Joan Baez, the Rolling Stones and the Pointer Sisters with 20 minutes of additional scoring by Billy Goldenberg. The film was pulled and following extensive re-editing was re-released on May 4, 1978, running 87 minutes, still without dialogue and retaining its eclectic soundtrack ranging from rock to atonal electronic music. At that time the film, still entitled METAMORPHOSES, was reviewed in the May 17, 1978 *Los Angeles Times* by the reviewer who observed that sections of the re-edited movie appeared abbreviated, others overlaid. He continued "As in any animated feature, the power of METAMORPHOSES lies in its drawings. And there is some superb animation on display here, efforts that can rival anything that Disney has turned out. A snake, representing evil, writhes with envy; the hounds that turn on Actaeon are completely terrifying; the devil in the Orpheus tale is immensely foreboding; and a scene where his backbone turns into a giant stairway to Hades is positively brilliant."

"All too often, however, (animation director) Takashi's vision seems a personal one, especially given the relationship between pictures and score. Disney influence seems strong, but never consistent, and there is the appearance of economizing in the texturing of both landscape and characters, and the supplemental drawings (such as Diana's griffin) are often brilliant."

"Primary selling point would seem to be as a 'head' film, attracting (the) 18-25 age group. Since many scenes will be terrifying to children, family appeal seems negligible."

Sanna eventually pulled that film out of circulation once more for additional editing, a new soundtrack of contemporary instrumental music and several songs, and overdubbed a narration voiced by Peter Ustinov to tie the sequences together. This version, titled WINDS OF CHANGE, issued in 1979, then, is the print now circulating. It is not

possible to properly judge this new entity based on remarks made in a review for what is essentially a different product. Animation work goes unchanged, however, and that is what WINDS OF CHANGE is all about. The ambivalence of the project cannot be understated, and Sanna must be applauded.

WINDS OF CHANGE's animation director, Takashi, studied design and worked as a designer in his native Japan. After moving to the United States where he attended the San Francisco Art Institute, Takashi enriched his work experience by designing for Walter Lander Communications, Inc., becoming art director for Impression Productions in San Francisco, and supervising various television animation productions in Hollywood, which included directing song sequences for the animated theatrical feature, CHARLOTTE'S WEB. Takashi's success was witnessed in the formation in 1977 of Takashi, Inc., geared to music production and the development of film projects.

## NUTCRACKER FANTASY

The tale by ETA Hoffmann, "The Nutcracker and the Mouseking," is the basis of the Sanna production, NUTCRACKER FANTASY. While the story is familiar to many as a ballet, this retelling incorporates the classic Tchaikovsky score and elaborates on more of the original story elements than are found in the ballet version.

The motion picture is a result of the intricate and rarely used technique of puppet animation, filming a frame at a time as animators move tiny puppet figures in sequence, the puppets themselves numbering close to 400 and varying in size from 6 to 12 inches.

To direct the animators in positioning the mouths of the characters in the original Japanese version, the voices of the puppets were prerecorded and from this a table was made of syllables versus frame count. Of course, the animators also had to consider the feelings of the lines and reflect on the manner of expressing them through puppet manipulation. (The version being distributed in the United States has a voice track which was looped to the finished print.)

Two sequences in the picture most taxing to the patience of the animators were the mice dance and the war scene in which 45 separate puppets moved simultaneously. The complexity allowed only 3 seconds of film to be produced per day. As a result, a year and a half was required for filming, not including puppet production and recording. With post-production work for the American version taking an additional year, NUTCRACKER FANTASY required over four years of earnest effort before it was ready for U.S. distribution.

The director of the tedious and time consuming animation was Japanese-born Takao Nakamura who studied filmmaking at Nihon University, beginning his professional career at Mom Productions and Video/Tokyo where he made four feature-length puppet animation films, two of which were WILLY McBEAN AND HIS MAGIC MACHINE (1965) and MAD MONSTER PARTY (1967), and worked on six specials for television, among them THE BALLAD OF SMOCKEY THE BEAR (1966).

(article continued on page 14)



# Japan's master of monsters

Eiji Tsuburaya, veteran cinematographer of Japan's Toho Studios, holds one of the most unusual jobs in the movie world. He photographs monsters.

What sets him apart from other cameramen who work in this specialized field is that he's a sort of jack-of-all-trades who not only films the scary creatures, but dreams them up, writes stories around them and assumes many of the chores of producer and director to bring them to the screen.

In recent years these monsters have comprised a lengthy parade. American audiences first saw Tsuburaya's work in the chiller GOD-ZILLA, which starred a prehistoric reptile. Equally gruesome monsters crawled or walked through the films RODAN, THE H-MAN and THE MYSTERIANS. Two of these Japanese-made movies played several large American cities simultaneously.

The man behind these ambitious projects is a glutton for work. Recently he tackled no less a project than the mythical creation of Japan for the three-hour epic, THE THREE TREASURES. For this picture, said to be Toho's 1000th production and billed as Japan's "The Ten Commandments," he conjured up a giant, multi-headed sea serpent to torment the film's star, Toshiro Mifune.

While Tsuburaya was at work he also whipped up the eruption of Mt. Fuji and a fearsome storm of sea for good measure.

Although this picture was a group effort in which many persons at the studio took part, it was Tsuburaya, the photographer of monsters, who contributed much of the film's dramatic moments.

While his specialty is weird creatures, he also masterminds all the

miniature and special effects work required for other Toho pictures in production.

His private domain at the edge of the lot is a barn-like structure surrounded by a cluster of workshops. From this stage he commands a small army of miniature makers, special effects men and photographers.

A typical Tsuburaya picture begins when he comes up with some new and horrible being. Immediately he hammers out a rough plot and hands it over to scenario writers for completion.

At the same time he sets his workers to the task of making the miniatures or devices which will be used in the picture.

Meanwhile he labors over a camera in his home workshop, trying out the new photographic techniques which he will employ.

Finally the actors start to work on one sound stage, while he and his assistants shoot their portion of the film in secret in another.

No Tsuburaya picture is put on film without a great deal of pre-production preparation for the camera work. He and his men carefully determine the lens, camera speed and the lighting for each take, so that these special shots will match the scenes which include live actors.

In THE THREE TREASURES, Tsuburaya's shots of the sea serpent were combined with scenes of the star, Toshiro Mifune, to show him battling the monster. Here, careful planning of angles and relative image sizes was most important so that both film segments would match when put through the optical printer.

Tsuburaya is successful because he is an inveterate experimenter.

Reprinted from American Cinematographer, August, 1960

by Clifford V. Harrington



From his experience he might have a good idea of what speed a camera should turn to show a miniature storm realistically on the screen, but if he is not sure, he will try the effect in front of a camera.

The storm in *THE THREE TREASURES* offers some excellent examples of his work with miniatures. The ship models were made with such infinite detail that he was able to move his cameras in for screen-filling closeups of the tiny seamen models who propelled the ancient ships. The speed of the action corresponds well with the shots which include live actors and gives a strong illusion of reality.

Tsuburaya also has a penchant for working out simple methods for filming visual tricks. The star of the movie *THE H-MAN* was a glob of pulsating jelly which was required to seep under doors and climb walls, as if it were alive.

Tsuburaya and his assistants compounded a special chemical preparation for this. In front of the camera they forced it under pressure through the cracks in the various sets.

The wall-climbing bit was about as simple. Tsuburaya just had the workmen construct the sets upside down and with the camera grinding in the normal upright position he filmed the jelly running down hill. In the finished sequence the goo appears to crawl in defiance of gravity.

Later he and his men were faced with the problem of showing the persons contaminated by the jelly, shivering and wasting away. Tsuburaya's craftsmen fashioned dummies from air-light, rubber bags and substituted them for the live actors. As the cameras rolled in slow

(article continued on page 14)

in the top left photo the late master effects-man Eiji Tsuburaya directs photography of the eight-headed, malfornate monster which was later married in the optical printer with "live-action" footage of star Toshiro Mifune. Miniature sequences were intercut with Mifune battling full-scale mock-ups of portions of the beast, as shown middle left. Miniature and full-size versions were operated by wire controlled by technicians above the set. A fine example of miniature construction in *THE THREE TREASURES* was the sailing vessel and motorized oarmen, seen top right, being photographed in the Toho back-lot "pool" by Tsuburaya's crew using two Mitchell cameras. The use of two cameras facilitated effects photography by allowing more footage to be acquired per take. Recreating natural calamities put quite a strain on the experience and knowledge of Tsuburaya and assistants who had to devise a storm at sea, tidal waves, fire and a volcanic eruption, the latter occurring at film's end. In the middle right photo the crew adjusts the camera tripod for filming of the lava flow following the eruption, using molten lead to simulate the flowing magma. With pre-production storyboards a necessity for films utilizing special effects, especially when miniature footage is to be optically combined with live-action actors who are to react to "invisible" monsters on the sound stage or on location, their use in *THE THREE TREASURES* was a requisite. Below are four panels for the monster/Toshiro Mifune confrontation.



# MASTER OF MONSTERS

motion, the air was allowed to escape. On the screen the dummies collapse and shiver in size realistically.

Recently we went behind closed doors to watch Tsuburaya at work on a new science fiction picture entitled *WORLD OF SPACE*, the story of Earthlings fighting a war with celestial invaders (*More than Meets the Eye* was *WAR IN SPACE*, the final translation of *Toho's 1959 space opera* which was released in the U.S. as *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE*—editor).

Tsuburaya was dividing his attention between his cameramen who were placing a Mitchell at one end of the stage and his technicians who were connecting wires to a space missile of the other. He and his key assistants were gathered around a charcoal burner to warm their hands and plan the next shot.

When the men had completed their preparations, Tsuburaya arose and supervised several trial runs. When he was satisfied with the results, the camera was turned on and the plastic missile with colored lights blinding hurtled through space. After two takes the shot was "in the can."

While his men were setting up for the next shot, we were invited to join the circle around the charcoal burner, and Tsuburaya related some of the details of his work for *THE THREE TREASURES*.

One of the major jobs, he indicated, was filming the eruption of Mt. Fuji. This sequence provides the forceful climax for the picture.

A fifteen-foot replica of the mountain was built in the studio pool, the only area large enough for it in the cramped back lot. After the top was blown off with gunpowder, vats of molten lead were poured over the crater to simulate lava. The eruption and subsequent lava flow were picked up in slow motion with several cameras to obtain a variety of angles at one shooting.

"In such work as this, which calls for extreme slow motion, I often use a Dabine camera running at 240 frames per second," he said.

The mythical reptile for the picture was made in miniature, but for several closeups with the star, a section was built "life size." Both models were moved by a complex system of overhead wires. On the screen the action is strikingly lifelike.

Tsuburaya brings to his present job years of experience in numerous

fields of movie work. He began his career as a scenario writer and later was employed in the studio laboratory. Using the latter job as a stepping stone, he graduated to the camera where he worked for fifteen years.

"Several years before World War II I was called upon to create and photograph a monkey-like monster which was supposed to fly through the air," he said. "I managed the job with some success and this assignment set the pattern for my future work."

After the war he continued working on science fiction films, each with a new monster and new photographic problems. As he moved up the ladder of responsibility he took on more duties until today he is the master of his own crew. Basically, however, he still is a director of photography.

Tsuburaya's years behind the camera and in the laboratory have given him an expert's knowledge of what effects can be achieved with camera speeds, lenses and the machines available in the printing room.

His study of chemicals, plastics, woods, metals and fabrics, the raw materials of his miniatures, provides him with an indication of what can be created from them and how they will appear on the screen.

"Because I am especially interested in the visual results," Tsuburaya said, "our pictures are plotted on a storyboard much in the same manner that cartoons are diagrammed in Hollywood. Here production kinks are worked out in advance."

We asked Tsuburaya where he gets the ideas for some of his weird creations. Usually they come from his own imagination, he reported. Even a dream or two has provided the basis for a picture.

What hideous monster is he planning for the cameras next?

"Perhaps my next nightmare will give me the answer," he said.

**THE THREE TREASURES (NIPPON TANJIKU; aka AGE OF THE GODS):** A Toho International production. Executive producers: Sanemitsu Fujimoto, Tomoyuki Tanaka. Screenplay: Toshio Yasumi, Ryuzo Kikushima. Director: Hiroshi Inagaki. Director of special effects: Eiji Tsuburaya. Director of photography: Kazuo Yamada. Filmed in Agglor and TohoScope. Music: Akira Ikuboku. Released in November 1, 1959. Cast: Toshiro Mifune, Yoko Tsuruoka, Kyoko Kagawa, Koy Tsuruta, Tokashi Shimura, Akira Takarada, Akira Kuba, Akikiko Hirata, Jun Tazaki, Kumi Mizuno. □

# SANRIO FILMS

**THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY (1968), and SANTA CLAUS IS COMIN' TO TOWN (1970),** all co-produced with Rankin/Boss of America. Recipient of the Oafuji Award of the 26th Marichi Contest and winner of the highest award of the 1972 Educational Movie Festival. Nakamura arrived at Sanrio in 1975 to put his expertise in puppet animation to work, and the result: *NUTCRACKER FANTASY*.

"The idea of an animated puppet musical is potentially enough to make many adults squirm even before they're in their seats, but *NUTCRACKER FANTASY*, which fits those specifications, should prove a delight for kids and is even palatable for their parents."

"(The) story, which bears strong overtones of *THE WIZARD OF OZ*, *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, and *ALICE IN WONDERLAND*, is purest fantasy, with a young girl dreaming of romance and adventure in a world inhabited by a king whose daughter has been turned into a sleeping mouse which can only be transformed and awakened by the rescue of her heart, which has been stolen by an army of evil mice. A heroic prince naturally accomplishes the task, falling in love with the young dreamer at the same time."

"(The) tale is embellished by several tuneful songs, some lavishly set pieces and plenty of comic relief characters, as well as two rather extraneous ballet sequences featuring live dancers, which will do nothing for the tots except provide them with the opportunity to run out to the concessions stand."

"Though (puppet animation) imposes more limits than those encountered in normal (cartoon) animation, heavy use of opticals and special effects transports the characters from their surroundings and lends a magical patina to the proceedings."

"Script adaptation by Thomas Joachim and Eugene Fournier, both of whom had a hand in the student-made *FRATERNITY ROW*, is literate and not condescending, content to work along classical fantasy guidelines and doing so handsomely."

"(The) single element which puts (American version of) pic across for over-10-year-olds is the consistent excellence of the readings by

actors engaged to fill in the voices. Melissa Gilbert and Michele Lee do beautifully as the dreamer as girl and grown-up, respectively. Roddy McDowall is properly noble and dignified as the prince, but perhaps best is Christopher Lee in four parts. His vocalizations stand as a model of flavorful characterizations. Other character parts are similarly brought to life by an array of good actors, some of whom double and triple up for small roles.

"Technical work is fine, although occasional image fuzziness is caused by some individual frame enlargements and freeze framing. Pic also makes an attempt to humanize the puppet characters by including in the story actual wind-up dolls and a puppeteer which are perceived as different from the 'real' characters inhabiting the tale" (Portions of the preceding reprinted from a review by "Cart" in the August 8, 1979 issue of *Variety*.)

**WINDS OF CHANGE:** A Sanrio Communications, Inc. production. Produced by Walt deFaria. Terry Ogilvy, Hiromi Tsugawa, Executive producer. Shintaro Tsuji, Animation director/story adaptation. Takashi Original stories: Osamu's "Metamorphoses," Narration text: Norman Corwin. Narrator: Peter Ustinov. Music: Alec Il. Costandinos. Lyrics: Enoch Anderson. Filmed in Panovision. Technicolor and Dolby Stereo. Released in 1979.

**NUTCRACKER FANTASY:** A Sanrio Communications, Inc. production. Produced by Walt deFaria. Mark L. Raser, Arthur Tomkowiak, Executive producer. Shintaro Tsuji, Director. Takeo Nakamura, Story. Shintaro Tsuji, Based on E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Nutcracker and the Mouseking." Adaptation: Thomas Joachim, Eugene Fournier. Directors of key animation: Fumiko Magari, Takeo Nakamura. Puppet design: Ichiro Komuro, Sadao Miyamoto, Reiko Tazawa. Set design: Masayasu Kaburagi, Hiroshi Yamashita. Lighting: Toshiyuki Nakatani. Running time: 82 min.; MPAA rating G; Color by Deluxe. Voices: Michele Lee, Melissa Gilbert, Lurene Tuttle, Christopher Lee, Jo Anne Worley, Ken Sansom, Dick Van Patten, Roddy McDowall, Mitchell Gardner, Jack Angel, Gene Moss, Eva Gabor, Robin Haffner, Joan Gerber, Maxine Fisher. Released in 1979. □





# THE MAKING OF GODZILLA

Clockwise, beginning upper left: 1. One storyboard panel from the multitude used, designed by Tetsuo Mori from the final screenplay draft, to define the picture's approach to lighting, camera angle, action and the possible effects required. In this sketch Godzilla's spine is ablaze, which will necessitate rotoscoping an animated light effect over the live action. 2. Early stage of constructing Godzilla. An "inner skin" of cloth is stretched out over a wire frame with thick layers of foam rubber applied for contour. Then, the foam rubber is covered by an "outer" skin of cloth. Eventually foam rubber skin detail will be added and sculpted, with a final coat of liquid rubber covering the entire suit. The torso, head and tail sections are each completed separately to be attached upon completion. 3. Work on the head progressing with Godzilla looking as if he has been treated for wounds inflicted by an adversary in one of the reptile's many battles. Worker tries on the head piece for fit. 4 and 5. Construction on body and internal electronics continues. Built into the head is a radio-controlled mechanism which an off-screen technician will use to animate the monster's lower jaw. 6. An artist sketching a "Godzilla" for approval by production staff. The concept of the beast was based on the *Tyrannosaurus Rex* and *Allosaurus*, but with the addition of the distinctive multi-pronged dorsal fin down the back. 7. Sculpting of clay model based on illustrations developed for the monster. Sadami Toshimatsu sculpted three prototypes in all from which one was selected, known as the "alligator" Gollia. Top: Second draft of the GOURA scenario.





It happened in the 28th year of Showa (1954)—an event which would shake the very foundations of the still young Japanese film industry, and whose cinematic shock wave would be felt around the world. The event: the motion picture GOJIRA, the story of a giant prehistoric beast awakened by man's tampering with nature.



Much to the unexpected delight of Toho International Co., Ltd., GOJIRA destroyed more than just Tokyo; it eventually smashed box-office records around the world and permanently established Toho in the international film community. Whereas the success of GOJIRA is apparent, little is known of the story behind the success.

Early in March of 1954 Toho agreed in principle to collaborate with Indonesia to produce a lavish spectacle to be titled BEHIND THE GLORY, with photography set to begin during August of that year. However, on April 5th this production was called off by Tomoyuki Tanaka, then executive producer at Toho. Tanaka felt that the studio's limited resources would be better utilized being channeled towards a project he had recently conceived. The producer had been impressed by the 1953 American film BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS (Warner Bros./Eugene Lourie), a tale of a prehistoric leviathan roused from its millen-year sleep by nuclear testing. The film had proven to be a financial success in America, and Tanaka felt strongly that the same formula could succeed in Japan. He presented his idea to the top brass at Toho, tentatively titling the project THE BIG MONSTER FROM 20,000 MILES BENEATH THE SEA, (DAI KAIJU NO KAI-



## by Ed Godziszewski

(Ed Godziszewski is currently editor of *Japanese Genre*, a Japanese film fanzine, and a co-founder of the Japanese Fantasy Film Society. Many years of collecting Japanese movie material, films and videotapes, and contact with individuals in Japan has allowed the author to amass a sizable amount of information on the topic of Japanese genre films. We are indebted to Mr. Godziszewski, and Hiroaki Koda, translator of the Japanese resource material, for this in-depth look into the motion picture that started it all. For more information on *Japanese Genre* and the JFFS organization, send all inquiries to P.O. Box 59163, Chicago, Illinois 60645.)

# THE MAKING OF GODZILLA

TEI NIMAN (M/R). By mid-April Tanaka received the go-ahead to produce his film.

At this time, a man named Eiji Tsuburaya was in charge of the special effects department. While working for Nikkatsu in Kyoto when he was in his 30's, Tsuburaya had seen Willis O'Brien's classic, *KING KONG*. Tsuburaya greatly admired the film, envisioning the day when he could make his own monster opus, ultimately outlining a potential story involving a huge octopus attacking a ship. When Tsuburaya heard of Tanaka's plan for a monster film, he submitted the outline to the producer and was assigned to the project.

The film went into production unfilled with the scenario written under the title "G" for "giant." Tanaka engaged Sengoro Koyama, a Japanese science fiction author, to pen the original screenplay on May 2, 1954. In the meantime, the producer was still searching for a title. One day, his friend Ichiko Sato told him of a huge man on Toho's staff imposing physical stature was likened to that of a gorilla and a whale. The man's nickname among the crew was "Gojira." Tanaka took a liking to this name and officially titled his film *GOJIRA* (*GODZILLA*). With all phases of pre-production in full swing, the making of the picture was announced on July 5.

Many drafts of the scenario were developed from Koyama's original treatment. Tsuburaya's giant octopus concept was eventually dropped in favor of a giant amphibious reptile. The octopus would have had its destructive capabilities limited to the sea, making its threat to mankind somewhat diminished. Tanaka, the screenwriter Takeo Murata, director Ishiro Honda, and Eiji Tsuburaya all contributed ideas toward improving the scenario. Upon its completion, the final draft was transferred into hundreds of storyboards by Iwao Mori. From these initial sketches Eiji Tsuburaya set out to design the special effects.

According to the screenplay, the film was not supposed to end with the silent prayer for Serizawa aboard the ship as it presently does. The final draft called for Ogata and Emiko to return by helicopter to the spot where Gojira was destroyed and drop a prayer wreath into the sea in honor of the scientist's sacrifice.

Director Honda had a pool of five actors at Toho to tap for the film. The distinguished and respected Takashi Shimura was selected to portray the elderly paleontologist, Dr. Yamane. Akihiko Hirata was originally cast to play the major male role of Ogata, but after several testings it was determined that he was not suited for the part. The role of Ogata was instead assigned to the handsome, young actor Akira Takarada, with Hirata securing the part of the myopic Dr. Serizawa. It was felt that Takarada was more appropriate as romantic interest for Emiko, the major female role who would be played by Momoko Kochi.

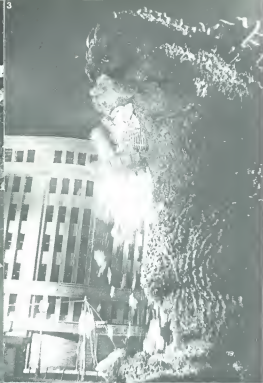
Every bit as important a part of pre-production was the designing of the true star of the film, the monster Gojira. The concept of the reptile was closely based upon the dinosaurs *Tyrannosaurus Rex* and *Allosaurus*, but with one distinctive difference—a multi-plated dorsal fin down the back. Based on the illustrations developed for the beast, Sadamichi Tashimizu was assigned the task of constructing a clay model. The first prototype very closely resembled a *Tyrannosaurus*.

*GOJIRA* (*GODZILLA*). Produced by Toho International, Inc., Executive producer Toruoyuki Tanaka, Director Ishiro Honda, Art directors Takeo Kita, Satoshi Chuka, Director of photography Masao Tamai, Recording engineer Hisashi Shimomura, Director of lighting Choshiro Ishiguro, Composer of film score Akira Fukube, Author of original story Shigeru Kayama, Authors of screenplay Takeo Murata, Ishiro Honda, Special effects personnel Eiji Tsuburaya (director), Akira Watanabe (art director), Kuchiro Kahida (director of lighting), Hiroshi Mukoyama (director of optical photography). Running time: 98 minutes. Released November 3, 1954. Cast: Takashi Shimura (Kyohar Yamane), Momoko Kochi (Emiko Yamane), Akira Takarada (Hidetaka Ogata), Akihiko Hirata (Daisuke Serizawa).



Clockwise, beginning lower left: 1. Ogata (Akira Takarada), Emiko (Momoko Kochi), and Serizawa (Akihiko Hirata) inspect the oxygen destroyer before the final mission. Hirata was scheduled to essay the role of Ogata, but it was determined that Takarada was more suitable as the romantic interest for Kochi. 2. Godzilla's head being fitted onto the finished suit. Haruo Nakajima's head is positioned in the neck of the suit where four small holes have been punched for vision and ventilation. Also visible is the remote control device which operates the monster's jaw. 3. Godzilla destroys the clock tower atop the Navy Dept. Store in Ginza. Note the incredible detailing on the face of the miniature structure. 4. Godzilla in Tokyo Harbor, actually a "pool" on Toho's back lot. The stark lighting of the monster scenes in *GOJIRA*, evident here, is one of the film's best features, producing both a realistic and horrific tone lacking in the color productions.





When he was in his 30's, Tsuburaya had seen...KING KONG. Tsuburaya greatly admired this film, envisioning the day when he could make his own monster opus.

Rex with a large, wide head. The body was covered with serpentine scales in order to lend the appearance of a sea creature to the monster. A second model was made, reducing the size of the head and eliminating some of its serpentine features. As the scaly hide of the first construction was unsatisfactory, this new design, called the "warty" Gamera, replaced the scales with large rounded bumps for skin texture. Additional bulk was added to the lower half of the torso to make the monster appear larger and more ponderous. Finally, a third model was sculpted, known as the "alligator" Gamera, and it was this concept which ultimately was used for the creature's design. This sculpture had the same physical characteristics and proportions as the "warty" Gamera, but its skin texture consisted of numerous small linear bumps instead of the larger and rounded ones of the "warty" version.

Toho was eager to whet the appetites of potential moviegoers as the picture started production. A broadcast play of GAMERA was developed for the radio, aired by Japan Broadcasting between July 17 and September 25, 1964. With this enterprising bit of publicity, people in Japan were sure to hear Gamera's roar filling the airwaves at least once a week during that time.

Actual filming got underway early in August with the project being divided into three teams. "A" group consisted of the actors and crew who would film the live action under the direction of Ishiro Honda and who would be taken to Toho in Mie for location shooting. The remainder of the scenario would be photographed on Toho's soundstage in suburban Tokyo.

"B" group consisted of the unit in charge of special effects centering around Gamera, while "C" was established to handle animation. "B's" first task was to construct the monster suit. The man-in-suit technique was mandated primarily by lack of money and insufficient technical capability. Based on his clay model design, Sadami Tashimatsu, together with Kazu Yagi, built the suit under Eli Tsuburaya's supervision. To build the body of the costume, a plaster mold was constructed into which liquid latex was poured. When the rubber hardened, it was removed from the mold, constituting Gamera's outer skin. To add support for the skin and sufficient bulk to the body so as to make it look solid, an "inner skin" of cloth thickly stuffed with bamboo and foam was made. The rubber skin was applied to this. The head and tail of the suit were constructed separately, each being permanently attached upon completion.

A zippered opening was left along the dorsal fin for the actor to enter. Care was taken to make sure that the suit did not fit too tightly around the actor inside, as constantly rubbing against it would raise many painful blisters. The actor's head was positioned at the base of the monster's neck where there were but a few minute holes through which to see and breathe. The head of the monster was mounted on a brace atop the actor's head. Built into the head was a radio-controlled mechanism which an off-screen technician could use to control the opening and closing of the monster's lower jaw. Upon final completion, the entire suit was lacquered a deep charcoal grey.

There were actually two individuals who alternated wearing the Gamera suit, Haruo Nakajima and Katsunori Tetsuka. Nakajima generally receives sole credit for portraying the monster, and indeed its subsequent features through 1972, he alone portrayed the monster. But in the original film, he had to share this honor.

Nakajima was in his early 20's about the time GAMERA was filmed, hoping to land an acting career in samurai films. As he was an extremely strong young man, he met the qualifications for the creature role. Great effort was required to wear the suit, which weighed over 100 pounds. Walking was rather difficult, as in addition to hauling around the heavy mass, the oversized feet were cumbersome and often got tangled up with each other. Fortunately, the heavy tail helped to balance the weight of the suit so that it was not overly top-heavy. The costume was rather inflexible in the legs, making it difficult to walk in anything except a straight line. Nakajima needed much

# THE GODZILLA

practice in the suit to perfect walking naturally

Filming the scenes with Gojira was a grueling experience for Nakajima. The heat was quite unbearable due to the combination of hot studio lights and virtually non-existent ventilation of the suit. Its weight could only be borne by the actor for but a few minutes at a time. The normal schedule consisted of rehearsal with Tsuburaya disassembling the action, followed by a 7 to 10 minute rehearsal in the suit without studio lights, and then a "take." Due to the intense heat, the actor could barely last 3 minutes. As much footage as possible was shot to try to minimize the number of "takes."

The strain on Nakajima in particular was demonstrated by a number of mishaps which occurred during filming. As Gojira was destroying Gaozu, the monster suddenly crashed to the floor before it reached the Matsuyaya Dept. Store. Nakajima had passed out, an incident which was repeated several times during shooting. Nakajima was usually so exhausted after each "take" that he would not have enough strength to extricate himself from the suit. Once he had been freed, it was not uncommon for well over a cup of sweat to be drained from the suit. Tea and salt water were always on hand to help Nakajima replenish his lost of bodily fluids.

Altogether, for the difficult experience of portraying the monster, Nakajima was rewarded with severe muscle cramps, a body covered with painful blisters, and a small salary. He lost well over 20 pounds, but he did gain some measure of revenge against Gojira, on screen anyway. Haruo also played the part of the electrician who threw the switch as Gojira walked into the high tension lines.

To avoid having to wear the full suit for close-ups of Gojira's feet handling the miniature city, a section of the body from the waist down, minus tail, was constructed. It had "suspenders" made of rope so that the actor could stomp around wearing the legs like a pair of pants.

Gojira did not appear on screen only as an actor in a suit. There were two small models of the monster which Tsuburaya also used. One was a hand puppet, seen only from the shoulders up. This puppet was fitted with a device which emitted a smoky spray, imitating Gojira's atomic breath. It was used in tight close-ups of the monster roaring and in the scene where Gojira bites the radio tower and topples it over. The other model was a small, electronically-controlled puppet that mimicked the chest up, having small rigid arms with moving eyes and jaw. This was used in a number of medium and close-up shots.

El Tsuburaya was faced with a number of problems in creating the special visual effects. Gojira was supposed to be 50 meters tall, but the suit measured only 2 meters, requiring miniatures to be constructed at 1/25 scale. To achieve realism, Tsuburaya could not film the miniatures and monster at normal speed, as any movement would appear too fast for objects of that size, so high-speed photography was employed. The actor in the suit was instructed to go through the action very quickly as the camera filmed at fast-than-normal speed. The result, when projected properly, created a slow lumbering monster and realistically crumbling miniature buildings. As this technique required high light intensity, Tsuburaya resolved not to use it in all scenes because of the strain it would put on the crew.

The building of miniatures was a painstaking and exacting process. Structures could not be made of hollow shells, each had to have the necessary floors and walls. For the scene where Gojira attacks Gaozu, an entire 3 block section was reproduced in miniature. When Tsuburaya inspected this set, he was dissatisfied with its detail and accuracy so he ordered the entire set destroyed and rebuilt. Fortunately for the crew, the second attempt passed El's scrutiny. To allow for more realistic-looking miniature hardware, miniature cannons and artillery were built of heavy cast iron to enable them to absorb the recoil of their explosive charges without vibrating unnaturally.

Tsuburaya proved to be a masterful innovator during filming, exemplified in the scene where Gojira, struggling in the high tension

## 水爆大怪獣映画



(Composer Akira Fukube) knew very little of the title character, just being told that it would be "one of the biggest things ever on the screen."

wires, melts the supporting towers with its atomic breath. Had the towers been made of metal, an enormous amount of heat probably necessitating a real flame, would have been required to melt them. Tsuburaya wanted an animated ray to cause the destruction instead, so he devised a simple way to achieve the effect. A separate set of miniature towers was built of wire and painted silver. By shining a bright studio light on them, the structures melted easily and naturally. When the paint melted away, only the white was remaining, giving the illusion that the towers had turned white-hot.

Both Honda and Tsuburaya collaborated closely on the set up and direction of the special effects scenes. During this time, the pair had an interesting experience as director Honda later recalled: "We Honda and Tsuburaya were at the Matsuyaya Dept. Store rooftop in Gaozu, discussing the possibility of starting a film at Shikabara and having it travel to Gaozu, and we wondered what people would be thinking of us if they overheard our conversation. Sure enough, at the first floor exit, we were stopped and investigated."

An important phase of the production was creating the roar of Gojira. The intent was to create a powerful below, totally unlike that of any existing animal. Tests using animal roars which were mixed, reverbated, reversed, etc. proved unsatisfactory. The distinctive voice of Gojira was eventually achieved by reverberating the sound of a contrabass, a stringed instrument played on a octave below the normal bass range, being rubbed with a coarse leather glove. Gojira's truncheon footfalls were accomplished by striking a large drum with the end of a knotted rope.

Akira Fukube, whose musical scores have become a trademark of Toho's science fiction on-screen films, has expanded the film's genre with GOJIRA. Amazingly, Fukube wrote his music without having seen any of the footage. He knew very little of the title character, just being told that it would be "one of the biggest things ever on the screen." With that in mind, Fukube took the copy of the script and authored a powerful composition for the picture. Audiences seldom forget the ominous, pounding march heard during Gojira's rampage through Tokyo, conjuring up an atmosphere of death.

After two months of pre-production and 20 days of filming, GOJIRA was completed and ready for release. The entire cast and crew assembled for a festive party on the Toho lot where the Gojira suit, mounted atop a platform, overlooked the celebration.

The film represented a huge financial gamble for Toho. An average Japanese production in 1954 cost 240,000 yen, but the budget for GOJIRA was an astounding 60 million yen. The stringing of theatrical prints and promotion pushed the figure to a round 100 million.

As it turned out, the investment was a wise one. The film did phenomenal business in Japan and subsequently world-wide. GOJIRA premiered November 3, 1954, huge banners and artwork display greeted each theater in which the film was screened. It was so common for a theater-goer to wait at least two hours just to buy a ticket. The enthusiastic response of the public was typified by these opening day crowds at Toho theatres in Tokyo: Nishikigi, 6,149; Shibuya, 7,544; Shinjuku, 5,885; Asakusa, 6,503.

The rewards of GOJIRA were not merely financial. Tsuburaya won the Japanese Film Technique Award for his work. The film went on to receive critical acclaim throughout the world. To this day it remains the undeniable favorite of nearly all the monster fans in Japan and is considered in Japan by many to be the second greatest Japanese film ever made, next to Kurosawa's SEVEN SAMURAI. Because of GOJIRA's success, Toho produced a wave of science fiction and fantasy films until the mid-70's, when soaring costs and dwindling audiences brought the production of these films in Japan to a virtual standstill. Despite this, thousands of fans turned out for a screening of GOJIRA during the 1979 Godzilla 25th Anniversary Festival, a testimony to its enduring popularity. GOJIRA was, and still is, the King!

For a critical view of GODZILLA's theme, see The Japanese Fantasy Film Journal #12 for Jon Iwano's article "GODZILLA and Post War Japan."

# Toho The Legacy



*The Japanese cinema of the fantastic has proliferated, reaching the conclusion of its third decade in spite of the cynicism from those who wish it never to have existed. The most prolific of the studios has been Toho International Inc., whose lead has apparently provided a course the country's remaining film companies elected to pursue, and in so doing procured a national image as to style and content. To view the film works of Toho is thus to perceive the whole, including the Japanese people's bent for fantasy entertainment. In this continuing study of the Toho phenomenon, the years 1954 through 1959 having been discussed in CineFan #1, the following installment will bear commentary upon the 1960 through 1964 period, the remaining years to be considered in future issues of JFF.*

by Greg Shoemaker  
editorial assistance by Randall Larson

Above: Yoshio Tsuchiya, left, as *THE HUMAN VAPOR* (1960), in a photo composite showing the sublimation of human into gaseous cloud as he floats above a city street. In the center, the "Telegran," played by Akihiko Hirata, stands before the "Claratron," a kind of matter transmitter, from *SECRET OF THE TELEGRAN* (1960), a film oddly similar to *THE HUMAN VAPOR*. On the right, Ichiro Aikawa, as "Death," bargains for the soul of doctor-to-be, Frankie Sakai, in the black comedy, *MY FRIEND DEATH* (1960). Facing page: Choreographed rocket launch, left, typifies film's belief-like attack sequences in opposition to its depressing, "real-life" dread of nuclear war displayed by Toho's fine cast of actors and script. In *THE LAST WAR* (1961) MOTHRA (1961), right, begins its cocoon weaving prior to transformation into a winged moth, with the aid of a transmitting tower bent into "shape" by the creature.

## 1960 dramatic changes..

The first part of the decade finds Toho surprising its critics and proponents as well, with a marked divergence from monster fantasy for three productions, two of them bearing so striking a similarity that Toho's reliance toward innovation is finally becoming apparent. Yet, Toho has taken several steps forward in 1961, one of which is *THE HUMAN VAPOR*, an offbeat sci/fantasy thriller whose undertone of horror is borrowed from "The Phantom of the Opera," here a love affair affected by science gone awry, rather than in Leroux's novel in which love has gone awry, as detailed in the following.

The story deals with a man who, through a freak scientific experimental accident, is given the power to turn into "vapor" at will. A love affair revolves around a dancer and the vapor-man who uses his newly acquired talent to secure financing through robberies and murder to aid his lover in keeping her classical dance school alive while the police attempt to break the mysterious crimes. In the end, the dancer, consumed by desperation and love, blows up herself and the vapor-man in a fiery holocaust.

The vapor-man and the dancer apparently are caught in the throes of change. For her, interest in classical Japanese dancing is on the wane; for him, as guinea pig, a failed experiment of modern science produces an unfortunate side-effect. Their love for one another produces another side-effect, perhaps positive in nature. Threatened by the world around them, both pitiful souls are transported to some more hopeful dimension where their intimation can continue by an explosive, life-consuming force at film's end.

Director Honda and special effects director Eiji Tsuburaya enthrall the viewer each in effective manipulation of his field. Honda slowly in-

introduces the audience to a realization that the film is not what it appears. The picture unfolds with each "clue" transforming that which seems to be a rather routine melodrama/crime film into a vision of uncontrolled madness. Tsuburaya incredibly brings the unstoppable terror to life in a series of creative tableaux each time the menace is poised to provide for his beloved.

THE HUMAN VAPOR is a slow film, exclaiming much from the viewer to maintain his attention, but an unusual story and threatening progression into the bizarre, appended by slices of Japanese mores, prescribes recognition for the film as an example of excellent fantasy.

Toho, in their promotional material, describes SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN as "A thrilling, exciting and entertaining drama of 'Science of Tomorrow'." Basically a crime film, as was THE HUMAN VAPOR, TELEGIAN's twist concerns an incredible machine which enables a man to be transmitted on an electric current to distant places in a bare instant. The apparatus is used by the "Telegian" to gain murderous revenge upon fellow members of the former Imperial Japanese Army who had left him for dead during WW II, forswearing them of their death by sending them military ID tags. The "Telegian's" murderous rampage ceases when the transmitter he is in goes haywire.

Far from innovative today, matter transfer, still years away from reality if it is at all possible to accomplish, in 1960 garners interest here due to scarcity of filmic pieces plying the idea prior to TELEGIAN. Handled matter-of-factly throughout the movie, the teleportation device is clumsily portrayed by a telephone booth-like set piece reminiscent of that used in THE FLV series and features a rather disappointing disappearing act from Tsuburaya's usual extravagant imagination. A paucity of effects indicates a storyline geared to the verbal rather than the visual, requiring creativity on the part of the director. Unfortunately, Jun Fukuda's leaden direction appears starved for Tsuburaya's garnishes.

A comparison between SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN and THE HUMAN VAPOR cannot be ignored due to their identical years of release and the common crime structure. Both films climax in surprise revelations wherein an antagonist receives retributive justice for audacities to mankind. There is the "science gone wrong" prevalent in the titles as well, which makes it appear as though Toho may dread a technological breakthrough as a threat via misuse or that man must pay dearly for his cultivation. Lastly, THE HUMAN VAPOR and SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN sport murderers committing crimes abetted by an ability to appear/disappear at will, courtesy of machine or mental command.

The departure from proven formulas continues for Toho with its release of MY FRIEND DEATH, a black comedy minus special effects, detectives, newspaper correspondents, and color cinematography.

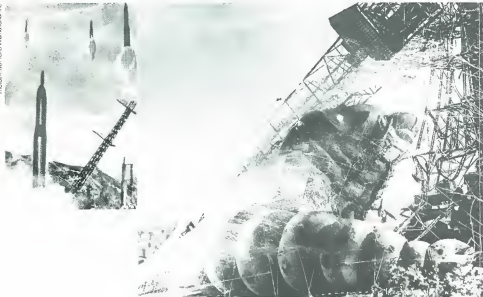
Along the lines of DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY, this motion picture personifies "Death" as a character who becomes involved in the attempts of Hachigoro, an undertaker's assistant, to win the hand of a beautiful woman. A number of dark bargains are arranged—"Death" helping Hachigoro become a great doctor by determining which patients will die and which will miraculously recover—until the two quarrel and a pursuit results. In the end, "Death" decides to go his own solitary way, and Hachigoro is left in the loving arms of his wife.

The film's optimistic conclusion is paradoxical because of the protagonist's contract with "Death." Predominating storylines in film and literature maintain an eventual corporeal death with the soul forever damned to hell for committing such a pact. MY FRIEND DEATH is an exhilarating reverse.

The last entry for 1960 is misleadingly described in a quote from a Toho publicity announcement: "Boys, girls, gangsters and ghost are blocked in by an avalanche. What happens?" The blurb hints at more than is offered by THE SPOOK COITAGE, a youth-oriented, comedy film whose plot appears stolen from the archives of the early years of American International. The ghost is revealed to be a businessman whose resemblance is so striking to the deceased husband of a woman who owns a cottage nestled high in a snow-covered mountain that she believes the man is her spouse, killed in an avalanche some 30 years earlier. His death somehow precipitates a rumor that anyone approaching the "spook cottage" will be faced with an imminent accident. To respond to the rhetorical question posed by Toho's publicity writer: "Who cares?"

## 1961 look to the skies...

Filed as a plea against the arms race, primarily the build-up of nuclear armament, and to defuse the button-pushing mentality so common with the military establishment, THE LAST WAR focuses on a family and several individuals in government and the armed service, all impotent to obviate the flow of events which eventually lead to near destruction of all mankind, creating a personal film of incredible power. It is an awesome and frightening view of a time when man, rather than uniting to seek a workable solution to his ideological conflicts, resorts to the impersonal devices of modern warfare. As the film unfolds, it hints of hope, that logic will prevail. But it is not to be so. The film does end on a positive note, offering hope for the remaining few survivors to rebuild anew that which man had so thoughtlessly torn asunder, but still the tone of the film is one of pervading doom. The in-





terf of the producers of the film succeeding, to warn of the result the present course could lead.

Eji Tsuburaya and his technicians enhance death and destruction with their moving landscapes filled with colorful mushroom clouds and choreographed rocket attacks. Reality is held in check as the viewer acquires an affection for the characters threatened with annihilation. One hopes that, as the screen goes black, it would never happen.

Furthering the format of new film/new monster, the story of *MOTHRA* is told as a modern-dress fairy tale, though American advertising would lead us to believe otherwise. Breaking the film down into its components: tiny, twin Aliens of Infant Island, innocent beauty and charm hyped by songstresses Emi and Yumi Ito, kidnapped for commercial enterprises; ritualistic endeavors of the Infant Island natives to their god of the mountain for safe return of the twin acolytes; the god, Mothra, transforming through 3 life cycles, acting as unintentional dreadnought in its quest, detailed, colorful monster war waged against man and machine, efforts of the honest folk to aid in the Aliens' rescue, twins returned to Infant Island riding upon the god's back; victims meeting with justice; peace restored with a world of lost in balance.

Yet, there is horror evident in *MOTHRA*, viewed in the scarred and scorched terrain of Infant Island where nuclear testing occurred, a grim reminder of the islands decimated by America prior to and following the attack upon Japan. Just desserts to the officiousness of man are portrayed by the wholesale destruction of cities, bulldozed into oblivion by the caterpillar and wind-blasted by the moth in sequences akin to the awesome spectacle of *RODAN* or *BATTLE IN OUTER SPACE*.

An analogy is evident in Mothra's transformation from its ugly larval stage to that of the beautiful, winged insect. Man's increased awareness of his destructive tendencies at the finale makes him more beautiful for the knowledge he has amassed.

Other considerations on the film:

1. *MOTHRA* initiates the first occurrence in a Japanese production of a beast surviving at conclusion. Paul Beckly, from his review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, dated July 12, 1963, offers that "children are known to regard unhappily the destruction of such creatures, no matter how much damage they may wreak." Though the possibility of a sequel may have been entertained when the script was written, the script-writer's adherence to the fairy tale concept more likely explains this phenomenon.

2. *MOTHRA*, again toys with the anti-bomb stance that permeates Toho genre films of this and the earlier period. The premise is soon to wane in favor of the "relevancy" of space travel and space itself from which to birth new horrors.

Lastly for 1961, there is *THE YOUTH AND HIS AMULET*, a rather depres-

sing and complex melodrama about a boy, his loves and heart breaks, and the misunderstanding of adults. Fantasy enters the picture when Gen, a 13-year-old boy, finds a small idol of his favorite god, Fudomochi, favored because of his strength. Imagining the statue to come to life and speak to him, the living god played by Toshiro Mifune, Gen steals the idol and consults it whenever he seeks advice. The bored thief adds to Gen's already crumbling family relationship, and he is sent away for adoption.

## 1962 horrors from the void...

*KING KONG VS GODZILLA* features the return of two of moviedom's most successful monsters. Kong has been absent 29 years. Godzilla, 7. Unfortunately, the war is not propitious.

No longer an animated puppet, Kong is now a man-in-suit creation, possibly one of the poorest to grace the screen, fake fur and latex falling to hide the motivating force within. Godzilla has gotten fat and squid since his previous days of offhanded glory. Kong's battle with a live squid provides the only realistic and terrifying moments of either star.

As the beasts pass toward cruelty, so does the tone of the film. Gross humor and slapstick have been implanted in the production's structure. The tragic deaths of the Japanese citizenry are coupled with the slapstick antics of two giant buffoons with miserable results in this serio-comedy. Robert Salmaggi in his June 27, 1963 review for the *New York Herald Tribune* expresses it thus: "A knockdown, dragout showdown battle. It's like that straight through, with everything played for laughs. Kong gets the major share of the laughs with his half-nelsons, stone throwing and right hooks."

The effects fare just as well. "When the pair of prehistoric monsters finally get together for their battle royal, the effect is nothing more than a couple of dressed-up stunt men throwing cardboard rocks at each other," opines Eugene Archer in the *New York Times* June 27, 1963 issue. Salmaggi adds, "The buildings that crumble under Godzilla's heel look as fake as they really are."

The American version inserts English-language footage which attempts to scientifically authenticate the monsters' motivations as they race pell-mell to their eventual gack each other. The race bringing the pace of the film to a virtual halt whenever the scenes appear, falls flat on its face when an "authority" holds up to the camera a children's book on dinosaurs with which he defends his sentiments, adding unintentional humor to an already ludicrous film.

Ties to the 1933 *KING KONG* remain, however, though none match



Big, hairy, rubber Toho Kong clambers up Tokyo's Diet Building in scene above from *KING KONG VS GODZILLA* (1962). Center, Luzon (Toshiro Mifune) and magician (Ichiro Arishima), shocked to see an oar in the swashbuckling fantasy film, *SAMURAI PIRATE* (1963). Mifune as god Fudomochi in *THE YOUTH AND HIS AMULET* (1961), far right.





the atmospheric splendor and mystery of the original: the primitive, aggressive natives, the island retreat of Kong from which he is sequestered, the giant ape's attraction for a singularly attractive woman. King's grand play atop the tallest structure in his new environment, and his battles with primordial dangers.

KING KONG VS. GODZILLA's importance to Toho's history cannot be denied, providing as it does the battleground for a re-emergence of two popular man-stars long in hiatus. It also presents for Toho the first pining of beasts, a device which this author finds most destructive due to the promulgation of endless "meet" films, the majority of which add little to the monster genre. But money dictates direction. And then there is overkill!

An ironical sidelight to this picture finds the Japanese players discussing the means with which they might dispatch or divert the rampaging behemoths. The atom bomb is discussed as a last resort, yet it never is employed.

Toho's last venture into the realm of the space opera/science fiction film until the latter half of the seventies, though the far flung reaches of the universe will be the spawning ground for several monster-fic creations, is represented by GORATH, notable for its intelligent approach to space and the human lives affected by the inexplicable happenings from that mysterious void, here a meteor 6000 times the mass and gravitational pull of Earth toward which it is swiftly moving.

The first part of the film involves the launching of several rockets into space to probe the fiery orb, code-named "Gorath." Involving the loss of many human lives in the quest. The latter portion of the film which is set on Earth, dwells on a few souls, representing humanity, singled out to develop the effect of the impending catastrophe. Following THE LAST WAR's example, the message is unification of effort of all peoples, and like that film this finale offers an opportunity to rebuild from the destruction, in GORATH resulting from the passing meteor and the shifting of the Earth from its orbit by means of enormous jet engines strategically located at a South Polar base.

With what appears to be a throwaway sequence, Toho introduces a mammoth, antediluvian walrus, long before Ray Harryhausen ever thought to use such a beast in his SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER, a creature released from his eon-old prison of ice in the Antarctic to impel the implementation of the hydrogen-jets. His moments on celluloid are short as he tries to snuff out the alien heat and is repulsed by the laser blast from a reconnaissance craft cruising over his swath of destruction. The American print deletes any reference to the walrus, Magma, but the gap is evident in the editing.

The originality of GORATH's story line is in question. Daisel Toho's major competitor until the company's bankruptcy in 1971 (since reformed in 1976 on a much smaller scale), released a film bearing similar plot

developments in 1954 under the title of SPACEMEN APPEAR IN TOKYO which details the events surrounding an asteroid whose path lies blocked by Earth. Witnessed are violent storms, the effects of great temperature increases, bursting dams and waves of pounding water. Screenplay similarity is probably coincidental, or is it?

Special effects are numerous and superb. Takaraya's credentials are again put on the line as he creates natural calamities, military operations and space flights that are ambitious, complex and enormous in scope. He has proven himself up to the task once again.

## 1963 a churl in every port..

Another tit spectacular, ATORAGON, known in the U.S. as ATRAGON, follows closely upon the heels of GORATH. This time the depths of the ocean are probed, an area associated with innumerable myths and legends.

The tabular underwater continent of Mu is the focus, which, having survived its cataclysmic sinking ages earlier, exists beneath the sea. Its people, armed with unique and powerful weapons, threaten to surface and dominate the Earth. But the Mu people are defeated by Atragon, a colossal flying super-submarine which defeats even Mu's mightiest of defenses, Manda, a huge sea serpent.

This incongruous fighting machine of Mu, whose entanglement with Atragon proves its own undoing, is actually a marionette. With close-ups portraying Manda as a frightening performer, illusion is shattered by a few jerky, puppet-like motions (and improper camera speed) showing the serpent in long shot. Atragon's vapor cannon quickly dispatches Manda, freezing it to an apparent death on the ledge of an undersea ridge.

The indestructible Atragon is legitimate star of the film. All is centered around the super-sub, injecting it with pseudo-human wit. Cheering the craft onward cannot be considered irrational. Super-warships may be old hat, but they are amazingly effective as heroes in science fiction, with time adding only those refinements envisioned by modern technology—and a vivid imagination.

The parallel between Jules Verne's *Atorax* and Atragon is provoking. The Verne machine compares favorably to the versatile Japanese ship in its prowess through the elements and in its intended utilization for pacific survey. Verne's frog-hero, Robur, is not unlike Captain Shinguf, commander of Atragon, in his fireless struggle against the proponents of war and their weapons. The idealism of Robur eventually destroys him, but Shinguf is persuaded to offer up



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himself and his ship into service to defeat the Mu forces if only to preserve world peace from one front.

In SAMURAI PIRATE, the sea is again a battleground, of battles hard fought and won not alone by experienced sword handling and human cunning, but by magic and mystic cunning as well. The enemies of the film's villain are turned to stone under the glare of the sorcerer's in his sway, and she and the hero's wizard duel as minute insects to succor their respective military forces. Such magic, accomplished by the use of cartoon animation supered over live action footage, and routing action sweeps the viewer into a world of fantasy and sword play, adventure and romance, not unlike an episode from the "Arabian Nights."

The action occurs in an Orient of the 16th century where piracy is an on-going activity. It is here that Luzon the pirate and his ship is set upon by other brigands, yet he eludes death by swimming to an island, there meeting a wise, old wizard who offers shelter, food and a story of the blonders' domination by the ruthless Lord Chamberlain, leader of the men who attacked and looted Luzon's ship. The Lord Chamberlain has his eyes on the throne and the daughter of the land's invalid king. Luzon stops the wedding ceremony when he glides into the fortified city on a giant kite, thus saving the kingdom and regaining his stolen treasure.

Due to the American viewer's inclination to gloss over references to locale and time frame, and by virtue of the average American viewer uneducated in Japanese history and terminology, Anglizing SAMURAI PIRATE to LOST WORLD OF SINBAD by American International, who double-billed the picture under an Italian quickie titled WAR OF THE ZOMBIES, cannot be faulted since the film works just as well in the Sinbad mythos, worthy characters and all, profling by the athleticism of an agiles Toshi Mifune as Luzon/Sinbad and Eiji Tsuburaya's novel special effects. But there the similarities taper off for never did the originators of the Sinbad mystique dream of the adventure their fictional character would encounter in the film SAMURAI PIRATE. The ogres, supernatural beings, and frightening machines of destruction are definitely inventions of the modern world.

Director Senkichi Taniguchi's epic formulation and enchanted atmosphere rank LOST WORLD OF SINBAD as the best of the non-Harryhausen Sinbad films and SAMURAI PIRATE as one of the best Japanese sword films, winner of the Italian "Trophy of Five Continents" for the "best specialized film" of 1963.

Premiering with ATORAGON at the Trieste Science Fiction Festival in 1963, MATANGO, eventually saddled with American International's degrading television title, ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE, is a curious appellation for a curious film whose plot aspects bear a similarity to W.H. Hodgson's short story "The Voice in the Night" (1907).

Shipwrecked on a mysterious island, seven people are desperately

in need of food and drink. Starvation is temporarily allayed by some canned food stocked in the galley of a beached ship. Records on the wreck disclose that the only edible food on the island is "Matango," a delicious tasting mushroom, yet also a deadly feast since eating the substance causes a person to become mad, gradually turning into a mushroom-like creature as the poisonous oils of the fungus are absorbed into the body. One by one the members of the group succumb, save for one who manages to escape in the rickety boat which brought him and the six others to the hellish island. As he turns to face the doctors to whom he has just completed the incredible narrative, it is revealed he is one of "them," having eaten of the mushroom, and is slowly being transformed.

Rolling off the tongue like some native curse, "Matango" is many things. It is a somewhat nondescript and elusive term for a species of mushroom, as well as the psychosis stemming from its ingestion. It is a fear of the loss of human identity, of individuality. And it is incredible horror, foreshadowed by the ocean storm which threatened the specked ocean voyagers in the film's prologue, as the castaways, having tasted of the mushroom, willingly accept their fate.

Though one might wish to label MATANGO a monster film, the assertion would only be half correct, for the picture is first psychological horror, an area uncommon to Toho. Implications extending beyond the conclusion add weight to an already unsettling situation. Do the doctors believe the "madman's" testimony? If the man's claim goes unsearched, the deaths of past, present and future victims drawn into the maelstrom of the island are a tragedy. However, if an investigative expedition is sent, will it too be caught up in the web of terror, or will it be able to destroy the threat? Perchance the whole affair is an aberration of the mind, a drug-induced hallucinogenic nightmare. For MATANGO there is no catharsis.

The film tells when the mushroom monsters, provided by man-in-suit latex costumes, are shown in full view in the bright green light of the jungle forestation. They are floppy, rubbery "Pans" in their own manner, giggling in high, child-like voices, leading the survivors to their doom. Editing of full-shots of the mushroom people to shorten on-screen time or their total deletion with a substitution of dark, mist-bathed interiors and moving shadows of hinted-at shapes would have intensified the horror.

## 1964

### things that go bump...

Diamond thieves, attacking a truck robbery, are surprised when the



Photos © 1963, 1964 Toho International Inc.



truckload of jewels soars mysteriously into the sky. The whereabouts of the gems remain a mystery, with everyone blaming everyone else for the foul-up except the real culprit, Dogora, an amoeba cell from outer space that combine to create several enormous jelly-fish-like forms. They thrive in the Earth's atmosphere through consumption of carbon-based materials sucked up into their huge maws. When the menace turns its attention to a city in Japan, the defense forces fire into the creature causing a structural change releasing the original cells. The unleashing of a newly discovered toxin into the air causes the cells to crystallize and fall to earth, crushing everything upon impact, including the animals attempting to make good an escape.

DOGORA presents an entirely new brand of demon-nothing of revived prehistoric behemoths or mutated giants. The space cells are perceived as vague electric charges zipping through space, taking on an almost cube-like shape, their effects department composition unknown. The phosphorescent jelly-fish construction is just as hard to pin down, and because of their masterful handling in the film are an intriguing visual delight, appearing real yet otherworldly. Solution to their makeup proves elusive, but marionetting is a possibility.

Cartoon animation is the answer to a miniature bridge destruction sequence, the hand drawn tentacles wrapping around the grid work and then tossing the structure into the miniature river it spans, helped along of course by overhead wires. The vacuum form of the feeding Dogora is accomplished by dropping miniature railroad cars and a pseudo-cool onio scaled down sets and filming at high speed. Reversed and run at 24fps, the sequence simulates the sucking motion of the Dogora. To this odd footage of miniature smokestacks and buildings breaking apart and being pulled skyward by wires, and the composite produces an eerie and awesome touch. The demise of the villains of the climax is accomplished by printing the running actors in to a miniature beach set and dropping a huge "cell" onto it, the matted image removed at the approximate collision with the ground. One reviewer feels the sequence is as offensive as the denouement in MARK OF THE VAMPIRE where the vampiric element is revealed as a play put on by actors to force the hand of the guilty party. The climax is disturbing because of its suddenness and coincidence of filming, but the film, itself so patently off-the-wall, is deserving of an obtuse conclusion.

Also disturbing is the lack of corroborative information explaining the discovery of the toxin, the creation of the toxin canisters (parachuted from planes to spray the toxin into the air) and the giant foam cannons (the cannoner theory on a much larger scale, aka THE MYSTERIANS' "Markette" cannons). Their incoherence, generation, possibly as a result of Americanization in regards to editing and dubbing is in opposition to the tendency of Toho to over-emphasize the mechanical marvels in their films.

DOGORA is demeaned by Nippon misrepresentation of the Western cops and robbers formula, instead making our thirties and forties villains, an outdated and unrealistic view of characters chewing up the scenery as slack, sullied, sunglasses lochers, leaning and cackling in voices that range from very gruff to child-like high, spouting dialogue that breaks in mid-sentence for assimilation into the Japanese actors' lip movements. The film is updated by four-letter words sprinkled indiscriminately throughout the script. As a result, and due to a storyline that is quite far-fetched, the extremes are the film's own undoing.

ONIBABA (also known as THE HOLE) is a coproduction between Toho and Kinio. Elga Kyakka, the latter formed by two directors, Karieta Shindo, ONIBABA's director and later director for Toho's KURONEKO, and Keaturo Yamamura, upon leaving Shochiku in 1950.

The film takes place in ancient Japan during an age of wars. People are starving. Two women, one a middle-aged mother and the other a teen-aged daughter-in-law who is waiting for her husband to return from the war, are living in a thatched hut on a deserted moor. Murder is their trade, ambushing deserting soldiers, then butchering them, stripping them of their weapons and armor and disposing of the bodies in a dry well, trading the booty for rice to sustain themselves during this troublesome period. When a local farmer stops at the hut and informs the young girl that he saw her husband die in battle, he attempts to seduce her, but the mother-in-law intervenes, suspecting the girl's husband still to be alive and that the farmer is trying to take advantage of the girl in her grief. The older woman is also jealous and wants a night with the man herself, but he wins the disagreement and the young girl sleeps with him. Following a general's murder, the mother-in-law uses the devil mask he wore to frighten the superstitious girl. When she discovers she cannot remove it, the young girl learns who has been haunting her. She agrees to help the older woman under the condition that she be permitted to sleep with the farmer whenever she chooses. The older woman relents, but the mask proves difficult to remove so the girl strikes it with a hammer to break it. The mask fractures, but the woman's face has been disfigured as well. The girl flees in panic with the woman in pursuit not realizing how hideous she is. The chase leads toward the dry well where the woman plunges to her death.

According to Donald Richie in *Japanese Cinema*, ONIBABA marks the beginning of change away from sentimentality, away from purity, retaining the social criticism, political propaganda, Shindo's sense of rhythm and pictorial composition that were the basis of his preceding films. ONIBABA, containing "the sound of wind-whipped reeds and views of the sunlit swamps, (is) full of something quite alien to Shindo's earlier pictures—sex. That sex and politics are bedfellows is not a new observation, but given the suspiciously pure pictures of Shindo, the re-



Left: Jelly-fish from space in DOGORA (1964). Center: Marionette Manda in a squeeze play with ATORAGON (1963). Above: Juchii Uno (in mask) and Nobuko Otsawa in the haunting ONIBABA (1964).

evaluation comes with a certain suddenness."

"Shinda depicts a period of bestial killing and animal sexuality in his ghost story." *Japan's* Svensson's evaluation begins. "In daytime, on idyllic sun glitters in the waters, but at night a luring full moon gives the film the tone of a legend. The excellent photography creates mood and suspense, with the wailing reeds as a recurrent motif. Shinda makes full use of the resources of Nabuko Otowa, his favorite screen actress, as the bitter, brooding woman."

ONIBABA is recipient of several 1955 Panamanian awards, receiving the "Sphinx Grand Prix" for "best film, best screenplay, and best actor (Kei Sato)."

The success of KING KONG VS. GODZILLA prompts Toho to return to this monster-meets-monster format for two films in 1964, and for most films in the years to follow. GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA pits these two behemoths in earth-trembling duels skillfully staged by Eiji Tsuburaya. Godzilla again returns to Japan with a vengeance, but encounters the gigantic egg of Mothra which washed ashore, exiled from Infant Island during a violent storm and now awaits hatching in a huge incubator built by promoters for financial gain. Mothra is summoned from its home by the Aliens who have sided with a newspaperman and woman photographer to regain the egg. The giant moth falls under the flaming radioactive breath of Godzilla, but the egg hatches and two caterpillars emerge, each spraying the prehistoric anachronism with a wrapping of silk. Unable to retain his balance, Godzilla topples into the sea to return renewed someday from the place that gave him life.

The most engaging factor of this fantasy is the characterizations of the three leads, Professor Mural, Yoko the photographer and Sakai the correspondent, whose interplay keeps the film alive during the non-monster sequences. The dubbing for the American version is an asset, missing only those idioms that present real dialogue. "Hogg" of *Wesley* agrees in his September 23, 1964 review and adds a kudo to the two young ladies playing the Aliens once again. However, their song, adapted by Akira Ifukube from Yui Kaseki's original MOTHRA score, and the natives' over-extended pasturing to Mothra for the egg's return, earned throughout much of the middle of the film, bores from repetition. Yet, the film moves at a lively pace, due to direction and script, and builds to tense climactic scenes.

Low enforcement and government bear the brunt of the screenplay's unusual attack on red tape, bureaucracy, playing of favorites and bribery as impediments to the proper handling of the egg, and thus to the protection of the populace affected by the ensuing consequences of the egg's mismanagement. This is quite a precedent compared to Toho's routine pokes at nuclear testing and radioactivity. The screenplay continues this path by pointing to the caterpillars' victory over Godzilla as nature's way of taking care of the

balance of things. Man and his machines are never connected with the reptile's defeat. All concerned are left to watch the dramatic conclusion from the sidelines while the good forces of nature win in the end. Modern technological man has been outstaged.

The U.S. release title of GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA, GODZILLA VS. THE THING, is fraudulently misleading. Confusion stems from the inference that "The Thing" is the resuscitated vampire alien of Howard Hawk's 1951 classic motion picture. The ad campaign furthers the ambiguity by showing a stylized, sleek Godzilla in the shadow of a giant question mark from behind which emerge a plethora of reaching tentacles.

While GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA, GODZILLA, and GIGANTIS maintain a high standard in the area of screenplay, photography and characterization within the monster vs. monster framework, and while KING KONG VS. GODZILLA, though short-changed in these facets, is interesting if only as a curiosity piece, MONSTER OF MONSTERS,

Bottom: The four battling beasts, Godzilla, Rodan, Ghidorah and Mothra from "The Biggest Fight on Earth," MONSTER OF MONSTERS, GHIDORAH (1964), far left; Center, the flaming meteor GORATH (1962) bears down on Toho space paraphernalia. The mushroom menace from MATANGO (1963), menaces, from left to right, Yoshio



GHIDORAH, based around the activity of four creatures and released in America as GHIDRAH, THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER, begins the gradual decay of Toho's monster cinema. A confusing script, cheapening of character development and increased percentage of film in the monsters' favor hint at what is to come which will weary the viewer with battle fatigue.

Implanted with the thoughts of benevolent Martians in her brain, a princess has become a prophesier to warn Earth of impending doom. A newspaperwoman is the only person to befriend the young girl until her brother, a detective, takes the princess/prophesier into police custody for protection against a group of former subjects who are determined to see her dead. The prophesied doom arrives when a meteorite which crashes into a mountain in Japan releases Ghidorah, a winged, triple-headed monster, flames spewing forth from its multiple mouths. Abnormal heat in Japan frees Godzilla and Rodan from their hibernation, and they are prevailed upon to destroy Ghidorah by

the Mothra caterpillar summoned from Infant Island by the Aliens. Mothra, Godzilla and Rodan join forces in a monumental battle against the menace from outer space and send Ghidorah flying back to the black void from whence he came.

GHIDORAH's first half, up to the tri-damned beast's inception, is exciting monster fare, well-conceived and plotted. The film builds slowly, introducing the featured players, both lead male and female roles oddly identified to those in GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA, and the monsters, cutting back and forth between the respective creature's resurrection and inevitable path of destruction. Tension peaks at Ghidorah's spectacular formation as fire and energy, belching skyward from the split meteorite/egg, slowly coalesce into the solid form of the monster from space.

Decline follows, introduced by what at first seems to be an amusing, if not unique, concept showing Mothra pleading with Godzilla and Rodan atop Mt. Fuji for their cooperation in the elimination of Ghidorah. The three, each with its own ululation, argue the problem, embellishing their capricious with foot-stomping and head-shaking. The sequence proves deadly as it is allowed to run over-long. Following immediately is "the biggest fight on Earth," the film's preproduction title, a less than serious and improperly photographed beast war, an unbearably event for the monster cinema as tails are grabbed like worms, and protection obtained behind gigantic boulders is played as a kind of "Peek-A-Boo, I See You."

Ghidorah, interesting with three heads and two tails, appearing awesome with cartoon animated rays spouting from each gaping mouth, rays which viciously tear into city structures, fails to reach his potential. His awkwardness, compounded by a man inside the monster suit whose hands are foisted across his chest as the suit indicates the uncontrolled quivering of the heads, as best as can be governed by wires from above the set, and bending of the necks at impossible junctures and angles forestall the threat that at one time appeared imminent. Amazing is the credibility Eiji Tsuburaya's animated rays, timed to correspond to the unplanned mouth movements of Ghidorah, return to the mammoth creature when it appears his machismo has been dissipated.

Part 1 of the Toho write-up failed to mention a possible genre entry. The picture appeared in research following completion of the film, and may not in fact be an actual generic film. UMON HOSUIT-SUCHO: YOKI YASHIKI, also known as THE MYSTERIOUS HOUSE, is a March 24, 1954 release. At the moment plot is unknown. □

"The Toho Legacy" will continue next issue with the period 1955 through 1959 under scrutiny. Stay tuned.

Tsuchiya, Yoko Fujiyama, Kunii Mizuno, Akira Kubo and Hiroshi Kozumi in the far right scene. Tabi The giant walrus, Mogma, missing from the U.S. version of GORATH (1952), with Takashi Shimura leading the retreat into the base in the left still. On the right, Mothra protects its egg against Godzilla in GODZILLA AGAINST MOTHRA (1954).





# CLOSEUP

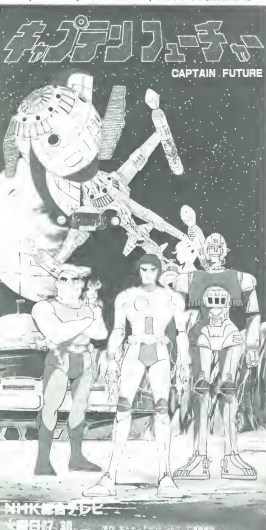
Seiji (STAR WARS: CAPRICORN ONE) the picture is being produced by Nebuta's younger brother Akiro. Special effects work will be produced in Tsuburaya's suburban Tokyo studio. The plot revolves around an interdimensional phenomenon that will actually occur in 1992: the alignment of all planets in our Solar System, which the screenplay has couched as a series of natural calamities on Earth that render it helpless against an invasion of a robot army led by Dr. Ultraman's arch-foe Nemes. "I've said 'The world can't have too many heroes'!" **ACADEMY PRODUCTIONS** independent producer Yoshitoku Nishizaki continued to mine gold from his feature and

TV animated subject "Space Cruiser Yamato." Following the success of two features, **SPACE CRUISER YAMATO** (1977) and **ARMS/SPACE YAMATO** (1978), and two seasons of an animated TV series (both from which was used to "create" the two features), an all new feature was released Aug. 2, 1980 which picked up where Academy's animated 2-hour TV special **SPACE CRUISER YAMATO: THE NEW VOYAGE** (1979) left off. The new feature for theatres, **BEFORE YAMATO** (YAMATO KOWA NA) begins with the screen image in the normal aspect ratio frame size which then expands to widescreen for the tumultuous second half full of space battles. The

third season of "Yamato" on television (appropriately labeled **YAMATO 3**) began broadcast Oct. 18, 1980. The 50-episode series is not an adaptation of **BEFORE YAMATO** as previously thought. The focus of producer Nishizaki, author and director (of **Matsumoto**) with Toshiyuki Takeuchi (also as co-director), and comic book artists Miyagawa return once more for the new feature, in addition to the three animated theatrical films. The producer is trying to develop a live-action "Yamato" picture for which he is negotiating to buy a US battleship, but not surprisingly has so far met with only a negative reaction from Washington, though he is still persisting in his efforts. However if all else fails he'll use a 90-foot cruiser (named "Yamato").

Shown below are publicity posters advertising two television series to possible interested viewers: **CAPTAIN FUTURE** (Toei, 1978), based on the US pulp hero created by Edmond Hamilton, **SPACE PRATE, CAPTAIN HARLOCK** (Toei, 1978), who also appeared in the **GALAXY EXPRESS 999** feature, designed by Leiji Matsumoto.

Photo Art - 1978 Toei Co., Ltd.











ed to a forced labor camp where engineers try to coax thermonuclear energy from volcanoes. They escape into interplanetary space where they encounter the awesome and beautiful alien Yagor-Gajaght. The film must be available to the general film market. Columbia Co. #0-403. Suguru Sugimoto directs from Osamu Tezuka's screenplay.

**GOZILLA SHOW MOVIE**  
The retrospective consisting of footage compiled from previous *Gozilla* features may have precedence over the announced nuclear plant disaster film placing the giant *Production* however is tentative on both titles.

**GHOST OF YOTSUYA** (TOKAIDO YOTSUYA KAIJAN) Plans are in process to remake the venerable Japanese classic ghost story to be directed by Kei Kumai who said he would place more emphasis on the erotic aspects of the venerable Chusei Ichikawa.

**DEMON SIES (ONNAWANG)** Mystery and intrigue in feudal Japan has two demon spies, aided by demon parents in the hidden recesses of the mountains of Japan, becoming members of the Shogun's entourage to oust a plot to overthrow him. When their task is lost, they, only two remain, to support the Shogun's throne. Tokusatsu. A. 1980. 80m.

Top: Erotic psycho-thriller from Nikkatsu; STROLLER IN THE AT-TIC (1976). Middle/Bottom: Filming new effects for SUPER MONSTER GAMERA (Doi, 1980); the giant turtle's scenes are all stock footage.

**GOZILLA AGAINST MOTHER** (Japan) Released March 1980 with new poster art by Lei Motomatsu the film was doubtless with COMEYOMEN NOBITA'S DINCOSAUS (GOZARAGON NOBITA NO KYUJIN) an promoted lecture about a cute cat with magical powers from the comedy series of the same name. The comedy finds Doremon and his friends travelling back via time machine into the prehistoric past! Heichi Fukumoto directs from Kajo Jiko's screenplay.

**EARTHQUAKE 7.9** (JESHI NITTO) Trans. EARTHQUAKE ARCHIVEGOL! Well, with effects courtesy of Toei's Hatozono Tetsu, this is a very good example of a SUBMISSION OF JAPAN 1980 film. It's not as bad as *Island of Dr. Moreau* (*THE WAR IN*

SPACE) Screenplay is from the talented screenwriter and director Kohno Shindo (KUSONINGO CHIRABA).

THE WIZARD OF OZ Production for the animated feature was completed the end of November 1980.

**TIME SUIP (SENGOKU JETTA)** Produced by Tsukagawa/Mifune Productions/Toho the film has a modern soldier company sent back to the Japanese Civil War period via a time slip. Mifunaso Sora directs. The DVD release also Shiroshi Chiketa, Toshiro Mifune, Iano Nishida

**SAYONARA JUPITER** Fumita Tanaka not only announced the forthcoming motion picture based on Saiyo Kamoharu's **SUMMITION OF JAPAN** (VHS) novel

**ROBOT RUMPS** (JANISSE) ROBO DANGEROUS! TAI KANCHI! ROBERTO GURITA, from PLANETARY ROBO DANGEROUS! ACE VS THE INSECT ROBO ARMY! The animated theatrical short, running 25 minutes, was released July 17 '87. Director of the film is the old Shogho starlet Tetsu Imai. Yousu Yoshida authored the screenplay. MOTOHARU DANGEROUS! EBU on animated TV series since March 6, '87. Theatrical March 26.

1978 may possibly be the video program from which ROBOT RAMPUS and the following short film were taken for theatrical exploitation. Series based on a comic strip by Les Manning.

**PLANETARY ROBOT DANGUARD ACE NAVAL BATTLE IN SPACE (WARRIOR)**  
**ROBOT DANGUARD FRI LUCHU DANGUARD**  
A sequel to ROBOT RAMPUS, this short promoted film for the theatrical version in Japan and Tokyo and is a co-production with Asahi Communications. Direction of the 26 minute March 18, 1979.

**GIANT IRON MAN ONE-SEVEN: THE AERIAL BATTLESHIP** (JAFETSLUIN WANG-SERUN-KUICHU SPANAK) Arch for Brain returns in this live-action, theatrical shot) running 20 minutes and released July 7 1977. Presented in Telescope, the film directed by Kon Wicksoboyahs, is episode #15 of the GIANT IRON MAN ONE-SEVEN TV series. Brain, a renegade robot who intends to wipe out the human race, is the villain.

**JACKS: THE ELECTRONIC ORGANIZATION** (JANUS VIDEO) An live-action, theatrical short co-produced with Asahi Communications, the film is actually episode #7 from the TV series of the same title, directed by Minoru Yamada (running 20 minutes and dated July 1, 1977, the release). Such powerful comic book characters as Super-Weapons like the Flying Saucer, the Flying Bomb, Bomb-Bomb, and naturally the organization, are featured. Presented in Teletext, the NHK television was created by Shōko Ishihara whose four superhero cyborgs named Jack, Ace, King and Queen form the acronym of the series title. Two

**THE FIVE RANGERS** (ANIME) is a 26-episode series coming out of the series' home country, Japan. The series is produced by JAKUS: THE ELECTRONIC ORGANIZATION, the live-action theatrical short running in the U.S. since 1986. The series' premise is that WAB has lost its bases returning to send a squadron of UFOs to attack on H-bomb and put the world of mankind. The Organization now forces with the Five Rangers to fight against the evil forces. The five ranger dropper Katsuhiko Tojima directed.

**FIGHTING GENERAL DAIMON** (TOHO DAIKOKU) Co-produced with Y & K, this 26-episode series is a live-action series. The series was released March 17 1979 with direction by Toichi Tokimoto. The title of the 26 minute film come from a WAB TV show consisting of 44 episodes starting

**STARJANGER** (SF SAYURI-SUITA JINGA, Irons, SF VERSION OF THE CHRONICLES OF THE ROAD TO THE WEST—STARJANGER aka THE STARVINGESS) the 34 minute animated theatrical short released March 17, 1999 was a co-production with Leif Motsumoto and Asahi Communcio

lore that was directed by Mosam Abo and Tobi Opeolu. A full-size arena with its own life support in 1931. The space hero-opera presented an inter-fertile human civilization that is taking a war with a myriadic alien empire. The best human fighter is John Kugo, a young man of super strength and mighty weapons. Unfortunately Kugo is a pacifist who had to be imprisoned in a deserted world years ago. He is the only one who can help him from the prison and persuade him to use his powers on humanity's side. The series is a space-opera rewrite of the old Chinese fairy tale *Sunwuk* previously filmed by Toei as *ALAKAZAM! THE GREAT*

**GHOST STORIES OF TOKYO (DAITOKYO YOTSUYA KAIJAN)** A made-for-TV feature from ToeiTV, the film aired Oct. 21, 1978. Yuichi Kuroda directed. **YAMPIRE DRACULA COMES TO KOREA** (BUL. NAKA-KUJ. MACHUJON. BE. NAKKUBUJ).

**TV1: NAKI WOMEN SCANDAL**  
(NYUKUJIKU DOKURYAKU KOSHI NI  
ASAKAWA) ARIMA, WA CHINA WO  
SUKUSHU) SUGI) Co-produced with  
Asahi Communications. This is another TV  
feature though broadcast in 1979 and  
directed by Heime Sato, member of  
many of Toei's genre titles. Though a  
Japanese writer in Transylvania Dracula  
looms that the reincarnation of he just  
have now left in Robe - he goes East!  
He is finished off by a Van Helsing like  
doctor played by Kôji Yaguchi. The actor  
playing Dracula, Mutsun Ogasawara, had the  
main role as the false priest/mad doctor  
in *Dracula* (1979).

**KOKUSA REBU SAIZERO BANZA** A live action TV show about space travel which premiered in 1976, co-produced with M.A. and Radio TV.

**THUMBELLUNA** (OVAYUBU-HME) This animated feature was produced by Chieko Inada and directed by Yugo Saito. Filmed in Fujicolor Gnd. ToeiScope: the 68 minute production was issued March 15, 1978.

**GALAXY EXPRESS 999** (SINGA TEL: 5200 999) The 1976 animated TV program created by Ley Motsumura and consisting of 26 half hour episodes is about an interstellar train on a link through the Milky Way. A feature based on the premise was also released. For information on that see the article elsewhere in the issue. In the TV show, a different episode is released each week.

**MESSAGE FROM SPACE: GALACTIC BATTLE** (UCHUKARA NO MESSAGE: GINGA TASEN) (aired in live-action, this television series using sets, miniatures, plot lines, etc. from the original Toei lecture

**MESSAGE FROM SPACE:** Bigen became a cost in 1973, although incidents in the series were presented in a "what if" context. A theatrical short released July 22, 1975 with the same title as the original, *Message from Space*, was directed by Yamada and was 25 minutes in length.

**ARRIVERGUCI YAMATO (SARUBU UCHI) SINKAN YAMATO** aka FARWELL YAMATO: An animated sequel to *SPACE CRUISE*. YAMATO was distributed in 1975, but the work (which was a production work) with export sales handled by Modern Programs. Edited together from footage from the second season of the "Yamato" TV series, the film premiered in Japan Aug. 1975. The film was the last of the "Yamato" line to be sold to the public's attention that the





## CLOSEUP

begin broadcast in 1980 following **DENZIMAN: THE 1980** live-action show stars five new heroes, each bearing a helmet in which a "Dental Stone" has been imbedded, the stone being the source of the character's energy and laser rays. Equipped with a DeniKugger, a DeniMachine (scooter with sidecar), DeniHero (all-purpose, flying tank), Dai Diana (a giant robot), and DeniDog, the team battles their way through hamburger-headed hordes and movie projector monsters among others. Who get creativity's dead?

**SUN VULTAN** Following the lead taken by DENZMAN, this team of crime fighters called Sun Vultan has each member piloting some super vehicle which can combine with the others to

create a new planet robot! The 1981 live-action show featured the usual band of giant monsters which the team has to fight to preserve the Earth from destruction. **ASSOCIATED TV SERIES: GIGANTOR** (1981, MCA/UCB, 13 episodes, 30 min.) **CAST:** MAJIC, A. possible 1980 genre entry which jumps into dejected Sonopony by Mike Mendoza stars Megumi Iwada. **ASSOCIATED TV SERIES: GIGANTOR** (1981, MCA/UCB, 13 episodes, 30 min.) **CAST:** MAJIC, A. possible 1980 genre entry which jumps into dejected Sonopony by Mike Mendoza stars Megumi Iwada. **ASSOCIATED TV SERIES: GIGANTOR** (1981, MCA/UCB, 13 episodes, 30 min.) **CAST:** MAJIC, A. possible 1980 genre entry which jumps into dejected Sonopony by Mike Mendoza stars Megumi Iwada.

about a kindly little demon who comes to Earth with his magic hat, Choppy, and two evil competitors to fight evil monsters). GETTA ROKO is (RWS) comic book heroes whose super powers are joined together in different combinations to form three mighty robots: Dragon Roar and Poseidon). GREAT MAZINGER Z (W4), an improved model of Mazinger Z, the cartoon series that began the giant robot craze. Great Mazinger is a combination of futuristic fighter aircraft and a man-compiler suit operated by the young hero Koji. Together battling the demons who are trying to conquer Earth with evil robots).

**SWAN LAKE** An animated feature currently in production for release in March 1981. Kiyoyasu Yashiki is directing.

Below, Toho's newest disaster subject, EARTHQUAKE 79 (1980), left. Gamero returns, in stock scenes only, in Dole's SUPER MONSTER GAMERA (1980), right, although new effects footage of space ships and flying superheroes have been inserted as part of the new story, a parody of recent SF films. Shochiku distributes



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**MAGAZINES FOR SALE:** Vampi F&S (German genre fiction) \$1 Storage Tales #10 (Mystery comic) \$1 #2 Storage #3 (Movie comic, 2nd series) \$5 The Morning #2 (Marvel comic, 2nd series) \$5 Spaceman (Weisman) Jan. \$3 Sappé #4 (Covers detached) \$1 \$50# Movies Monies #12 Monies Fantasy #12 Monies World #2 (non-Marvel) \$1 \$10 Monies of the Movie Monies #14# one \$20 set \$20 Movie World Chronicle #1 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6 #7 #8 #9 #10 #11 #12 #13 #14 #15 #16 #17 #18 #19 #20 #21 #22 #23 #24 #25 #26 #27 #28 #29 #30 #31 #32 #33 #34 #35 #36 #37 #38 #39 #40 #41 #42 #43 #44 #45 #46 #47 #48 #49 #50 #51 #52 #53 #54 #55 #56 #57 #58 #59 #60 #61 #62 #63 #64 #65 #66 #67 #68 #69 #70 #71 #72 #73 #74 #75 #76 #77 #78 #79 #80 #81 #82 #83 #84 #85 #86 #87 #88 #89 #90 #91 #92 #93 #94 #95 #96 #97 #98 #99 #100 #101 #102 #103 #104 #105 #106 #107 #108 #109 #110 #111 #112 #113 #114 #115 #116 #117 #118 #119 #120 #121 #122 #123 #124 #125 #126 #127 #128 #129 #130 #131 #132 #133 #134 #135 #136 #137 #138 #139 #140 #141 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# TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA



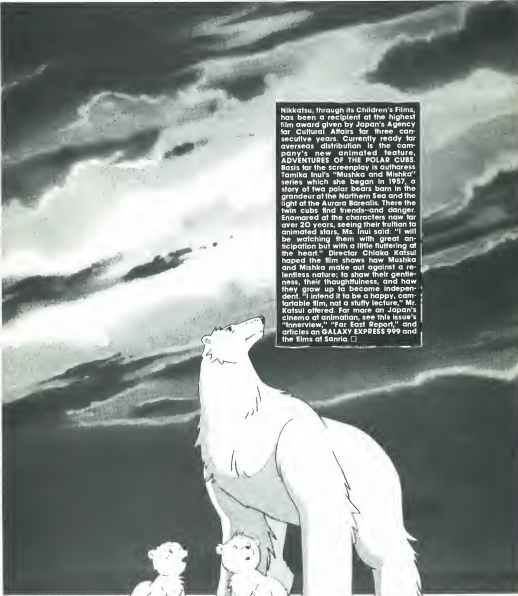
TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA is representative of the third generation of Godzilla films. It is certainly an improvement over the previous cycle in the series where a progressive detachment of the monster battle scenes from the supposedly main plot interests finally led to a state of complete alienation between those two realms, human and monster. From GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER on, however, we have had some structural modifications: a reduction in the number of combatant creatures, the substitution of pollution for atomic fear as the new haunting phantasm, and more elaborate justifications for further monster clashes with better defined characters and wrap-around plots. Nevertheless, traditional xenophobic perils, and here those insidious invaders from Blackhole Three in Galaxy M are more vengeful, contemptuous ("It's like the human brain, confused and polluted," says their leader to his acolytes as their screen catches a glimpse of Tokyo) and sardid than ever, despite (or an account of) their having become quite familiar to our planet. For the record, they were introduced to us in GODZILLA VS. GIGANT as being giant cockroaches in the shape of deceased humans, whilst in GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA they looked as if they were refugees from some PLANET OF THE APES television show rip-off. The time, though, we are given no information about their real looks.

The plot centers around the figure of Dr. Matsune, an obsessed scientist (well-portrayed by veteran actor Akihiko Hirata, who keeps a good balance between renegade fanaticism and guilt-ridden despair) duty deceived by the nasty aliens. His personal decay is narrated in the economical, but effective, form of a succession of dramatic stills. The character is visibly patterned over a previous one played by the very same actor, that of Dr. Shiroshi in THE MYSTERIANS, yet the revamping is made more complex with the introduction of a dead daughter resuscitated as a cyborg. The latter's condition of unwilling collaborator, plus the impossibility of clearing up her inner conflicts, add a hue of tragedy never achieved by the American bionic TV characters by whom she was obviously inspired. Unfortunately, the kiddie-show format almost suppresses this further dimension with crummy dialogue. For instance, the hero declares his feelings towards her saying, "Even though you're a cyborg, I still love you." Still, the introduction of sex in the series by means of the unveiling of the cyborg girl's breasts, complete with bionic nipples, may seem a novelty to G-rated Western audiences, but after Kaoru Yumi's seduction sequence in Toho's ESPY, a pic equally conceived for pre-teens, it comes off as a natural, if not mandatory, reverberation of the times.

The film also celebrates the return of Shiro Honda to the big screen, as since YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE he has been assigned to TV work, leaving his position in the series to the lesser talents of Jun Fukuda. Honda resumes his job with great panache and at a workable pitch. He skilfully proclaims his *raison d'être* with a superb low-angle introductory shot of Titanosaurus (incidentally, a rather feeble creation from the Toho stacks on awkward, fragile-looking, bird-like monster, never menacing enough), and an equally grandiose entrance of Godzilla, a dark silhouette emerging from the deep by night, slowly, majestically. Once the monsters meet each other, however, Honda plunges into the more comfortable, long-established format of a parish action comic strip, a catchword, of course, for effects director Nakano and his team to take over. □

by Horacio Higuchi

# ADVENTURES OF THE POLAR CUBS



Nikkatsu, through its Children's Films, has been a recipient of the highest film award given by Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs for three consecutive years. Currently ready for overseas distribution is the company's new animated feature, **ADVENTURES OF THE POLAR CUBS**. Basis for the screenplay is authoress Tamika Inui's "Mushka and Mishka" series which she began in 1957, a story of two polar bears born in the grandeur of the Northern Sea and the light of the Aurora Borealis. There the twin cubs find friends-and danger. Enamored of the characters now far over 20 years, seeing their trulian to animated stars, Ms. Inui said: "I will be watching them with great anticipation but with a little fluttering at the heart." Director Chiaka Katsui hoped the film shows how Mushka and Mishka make out against a relentless nature: to show their gentleness, their thoughtfulness, and how they grow up to become independent. "I intend it to be a happy, comfortable film, not a stuffy lecture," Mr. Katsui offered. For more on Japan's cinema of animation, see this issue's "Interview," "Far East Report," and articles on **GALAXY EXPRESS 999** and the films at Sania. □

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